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**Embodying punishment  
an investigation into the corporeal identities of women prisoners in England**

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# **Embodying Punishment: An Investigation into the Corporeal Identities of Women Prisoners in England**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**September 2013**

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## Abstract

*This thesis is a theoretical and an empirical examination into women's embodied experience of imprisonment in England. It investigates the body-punishment relation and adopts theoretical perspectives from the sociology of embodiment and emotions and feminist theory. It suggests that existing research has articulated the harmful effects of the prison from a Cartesian perspective, distinguishing between mind and body; in doing this, prisons research has neglected women's embodied reactions to imprisonment and partly overlooked technologies of discipline and punishment focused on prisoners' bodies. The thesis argues that the 'pains of imprisonment' are embodied, and that attention to their embodied dimension can unveil relevant nuances in understanding what imprisonment feels like. To do this, it undertakes a phenomenological-feminist approach to prisons research and illustrates that the 'lived body', as a theoretical category, can offer a more situationally-specific and experientially-grounded understanding of subjectivity and identity in the prison context. In so doing, this study responds to an invitation made in the field of prisons research calling for more affective sociologies of imprisonment.*

*In its empirical component, which comprised mainly of interviews with female ex prisoners, the thesis demonstrates that key coping strategies as well as various social performances in prison rely on the body as a medium of self-representation and as the source of emotional expression. Findings focus on themes such as health and rehabilitation routines, eating practices, the presentation of self, appearance and clothing in prison, drug-use and self-injury practices. This qualitative case study highlights that prisoner bodies change as a result of imprisonment, and argues that bodily transformations both reflect and transcend the prison, depicting women's experiences as instances of double oppression. These emotionally ambivalent experiences underline the permeability of prison space and the interaction between penal power and the socio-political landscape that endorses it, so that the experience of imprisonment is not merely constituted by the time spent in prison.*

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## List of Abbreviations

**BMEG:** Black and Minority Ethnic Group.

**BMI:** Body Mass Index; (Weight in Kilograms / (Height in Metres x Height in Metres))

**CJS:** Criminal Justice System

**EU:** European Union

**HMCIP:** Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons

**HMP:** Her Majesty's Prison

**MDT:** Mandatory Drug Testing

**MoJ:** Ministry of Justice

**NGO:** Non Governmental Organization

**NOMS:** National Offender Management Service; Executive Agency of the Ministry of Justice.

**PSO:** Prison Service Order

**WHO:** World Health Organization

**WIP:** Women In Prison Organization, UK; Registered Charity No. 1118727

**YOI:** Young Offenders' Institution

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## Acknowledgements

This thesis was funded by the Graduate School, King's College London, and I thank them sincerely for being a generous and obliging sponsor.

I am greatly indebted to this study's research participants and the various organizations and their staff who put me in touch with them. I am particularly thankful to Women In Prison (WIP), the Together Women Project in Sheffield, Catch-22 in Sheffield, Streetreach in Doncaster, the Cyrenians in Newcastle, the Blue Sky Skills for Work in Wakefield, Asha Women's Centre in Worcester, Addaction in West Sussex and 2ndChance and the Koestler Trust in London. I am extremely grateful to the participants at HMP Bronzefield and to the women I interviewed outside prison for their responsiveness, insightful contributions, patience and time, as well as their hospitality and interest in this project.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Elaine Player, who has supported me throughout this process both intellectually and emotionally. Whilst allowing me room to work in my own way, she offered invaluable feedback and patiently encouraged me to improve my ideas and writing. Without her support and effort this thesis would not have been written. I am also grateful to Loraine Gelsthorpe and Frances Heidensohn for taking the time to read and examine this thesis.

I am obliged to Maleiha Malik for her gracious attitude and valuable feedback on the theoretical component of this thesis. Her breadth of knowledge in feminist and other social theories as well as her eagerness to engage with this project has made this a less daunting experience. I am also immensely thankful to the support and guidance offered by Ben Bowling, who acted as upgrade examiner, mentor, colleague and friend on several occasions. I am grateful for his feedback on earlier drafts of my methodology and conclusions, his emotional support in times of stress and uncertainty and his willingness to help more broadly with my career development. I also thank Coretta Phillips for her incisive comments on sections of the thesis, for the opportunity to teach criminology at the LSE and for her words of encouragement and support.

Draft versions of parts of this thesis were read by a number of people and I am grateful to them for their patience and positive as well as negative comments. I am grateful to Liz Broomfield for her thorough proofreading and to a number of fellow Ph.D researchers who offered intellectual sustenance either through direct comments or through various informal discussions. Most of all, I am deeply grateful to Sabrina Gilani, Melanie Collard and Katrine Steinfeld for their friendship, emotional support throughout the years, as well as insightful feedback on parts of the thesis. Our discussions on gender, emotions and justice in various contexts have been decisive and this project has benefited vastly from their input. Special thanks also go to Hayley Gibson, Tom Goldup, Beihui Miao and Harry Nikolaidis for making the last stages of the Ph.D more tolerable and the overall research experience unforgettable.

Finally, I would like to thank Vassos, Lydia and Polina Chamberlen for their love, forbearance and support and Henrique Carvalho for putting up with me, making my world a better place and teaching me a bit about philosophy and a lot about magic. He has been a personal and intellectual inspiration.

# Introduction

## Transgressing research on the experience of imprisonment

We still await a sustained critical engagement  
between masculinist analysts of the penal realm  
with feminist analysts of the disciplining of women  
which will transform our understanding of punishment. (Howe 1994: 206)

[...]If I wanted to describe 'real life' in the prisons, I wouldn't indeed have gone to Bentham. But the fact that this real life isn't the same thing as the theoreticians' schemas doesn't entail that these schemas are ... imaginary [...] the actual functioning of the prisons, in the inherited building where they were established and with the governors and guards who administered them, was a witches' brew compared to the beautiful Benthamite machine. (Foucault 1981a: 281)

The 'witches' brew'.... is interactionist territory. And regimes of body work are no less of a brew than prisons [...] beyond the stipulation of certain theoretical points ... the basis of an interactionist perspective, or reflexive embodiment should be empirical research. (Crossley 2006: 31)

The *embodied*<sup>1</sup> experience of women's imprisonment is a neglected area of research. Although the sociology of prison life has long established that the experience of imprisonment is emotionally painful and entails several detrimental effect that have various social implications for prisoners and their families (e.g. Clemmer 1940; Sykes 1958; Goffman 1961; Gibbs 1991; Gallo and Ruggiero 1991; Carlen 1983; 1998; Liebling 1999; Liebling and Maruna 2005; Crewe 2009), the study of prison effects has focused almost exclusively in portraying the experience of imprisonment from a Cartesian, disembodied perspective. This arguably provides a limited, two-dimensional perspective that neglects important elements of the expression and repression of painful emotions in the prison context. Addressing this gap, this thesis explores how an embodied-experience perspective can contribute a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the prison experience and its effects. It suggests that a focus on embodied experience can enable a more *affective*<sup>2</sup> sociology of imprisonment (Jewkes 2012a; Bosworth et al. 2005; Liebling 1999) that appreciates the subjective meanings attached to the emotional and physical 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes 1958). To this end, this contribution invites a more theoretically

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<sup>1</sup> The term *embodiment*, which is central to this thesis, refers to the 'bodily aspects of human subjectivity' (Audi 1999). This is a concept that was of particular importance to (contemporary) Continental phenomenological accounts, and it is explicitly explored in the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962). Merleau-Ponty distinguishes between the objective body (the physiological body) and the phenomenal body, which is the subjective body as it is experienced. This distinction between the body as object and body as subject forms the basis of the phenomenological analysis of embodiment.

<sup>2</sup> The term *affect* appears in the philosophy of Spinoza (1677) [2002] and later, in a more refined form, in the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). The concept relates to embodied states similar to those of emotions. Spinoza distinguished between three affects: pleasure/joy, pain/sorrow and desire/appetite. Acting as an expanded version of the term 'affection', the term refers to the capacity for bodily change or influence as the result of emotional impact and it thus refers to a change of bodily states from one site of experience to another. More recently, the humanities and social sciences have seen an upsurge of interest in affect, characterised as an 'affective turn' in the making of knowledge (Sarbin 2001).

diverse approach that can advance our existing understanding of both punishment and its experience.

Sykes (1958: xii) suggested that researchers of the prison should aim ‘to see the prison as a society within a society’ and attempt to grasp the parallels between structures inside and outside the prison that make up the symbolic and tangible representation of modern punishment. Arguably, the study of the prison as a microcosm highlights the pervasive nature of social control, particularly the social control of women, in contemporary society. However, in order to generate a more nuanced understanding of the permeability of prison space and prison time, the focus of this study is not the *woman* prisoner as a gendered agent (e.g. Bosworth 1999), but, more precisely, it is the *lived body* of the woman prisoner as a key agent of lived experience (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Williams and Bendelow 1998; Moi 1999; Young 2005; Bartky 1990). Thus, with a focus on the lived body (Moi 1999) – instead of just gender – the study seeks to integrate “intersectionality” and the “politics of the particular” to express the multiple oppressions women face when punished (e.g. Hannah-Moffat 2010:194; McCorkel 2013).

The thesis focuses on the contemporary, English and Welsh penal context and aims to answer the following research question: *How can women’s experience of imprisonment be understood through a sociological focus on the interaction between body and emotions and to what extent can this embodied perspective elucidate our understanding of women’s ‘pains of imprisonment’?* Its primary objective is to explore the punishment-body relation (Howe 1994). A derivative aim is to communicate the painful experience of imprisonment and the harmed biographies of women prisoners by exploring how *punishment is felt* and what it means to those who experience it. Aside from its substantive focus on women’s imprisonment, the present thesis is a critique of the dominant methods used to understand the prison’s impact and functions.

This introductory chapter aims to sketch the main objectives and argument of the study. It will contextualise its subject matter by briefly exploring ‘who’ are women prisoners and it will follow with an outline of its theoretical and methodological foundations. The chapter will end with a summary of the thesis and an overview of its structure.

## ***Background***

Since its inception, the prison as a penal institution has been an important feature of theoretical and empirical examinations in the fields of sociology and criminology which scrutinised the function and aims of punishment in contemporary societies (e.g. Garland 2001; Sim 2009; Carlen 1983; 2002). The prison has been explored as a representation of state power (Foucault 1979), an illustration of society's moral code (Durkheim 1895 [1969]; 1900 [1998]), and as a central mechanism in the maintenance of social order and class domination (Rusche and Kirchheimer 1939; Wacquant 2001). Feminist criminologists (e.g. Heidensohn 1968; Heidensohn and Silvestri 2012; Carlen 1983; Howe 1994; Bosworth 1999; Hannah-Moffat 2001; 2010; Chesney-Lind 2006) have also pointed to the prison's involvement in a series of social control strategies which aim to regulate, discipline and correct in line with popular notions of socio-economic and gender relations. In light of these symbolic functions of the prison, it is fair to argue that the prison has been studied as an inimitable social setting whose experiences and effects reflect the changing socio-political landscape of the past two centuries (Crewe 2007a).

Today, the study of imprisonment and its effects is a flourishing field which has sought to portray the harmful and lasting impacts of imprisonment from various perspectives and contexts (Liebling and Maruna 2005). However, it could be argued that in practice, research on the experience of imprisonment has had little *affective* influence in communicating the dehumanising experience that constitutes modern punishment (Bosworth et al. 2005; Liebling 1999). In recent years for example, we have seen a 'punitive turn' and an increasing reliance on the use of custody (Garland 2001). Arguably politicians and the media have contributed to a public perception that upholds and demands harsh punishments (Reiner 2007). Consequently, the public has little knowledge of sentencing practices and the implications of imprisonment (Hough and Roberts 1999; Roberts and Hough 2011; 2013) and researchers have observed populist perceptions which do not regard the prison as punitive enough, endorsing, to a large extent, a culture of exclusion and vengeance (Garland 2001; Liebling and Maruna 2005). Indeed, theoretical criminology has suggested that in our uncertain times (see Giddens 1991; Bauman 1991), neo-liberal societies have ascribed a significantly emotional attachment to punishment (Karstedt 2002). Our communities have expressed an 'urge' to punish (Garland 2001) and arguably penal politics can be understood as *affective* and emotional expressions (Loader 2005). Within this emotive 'culture of control' (Garland 2001) and 'hyperincarceration' (Wacquant 2010), critical penological perspectives are increasingly marginalised and public policy and political rhetoric appear to disregard considerations of the ethical and material implications of penal populism

(Wacquant 2001; 2002). The thesis explores this current penal climate as it is manifest in the experiences of women offenders as socially excluded and stigmatised subjects.

***‘Who’ are the women who go to prison?***

The prison population of England and Wales has been increasing steadily over the past century, reaching its latest record high in August 2011<sup>3</sup> (Ministry of Justice 2013a). On September 6th, 2013, there were 84, 135 prisoners in England and Wales, of whom, 3,873 were women (Ministry of Justice 2013b). According to official data (Ministry of Justice 2012a; 2013a), the women’s prison population has more than doubled since 1990 (see also **Table 1**) and this sharp increase has been attributed to changes in sentencing practices (Thomas 2002; Gelsthorpe 2004; 2006). The women’s prison population reached a peak in 2002 but in the late 2000s the proportion of women in prisons has slightly decreased. Currently, there are 13 women’s prisons in England and Wales and women represent approximately 4.6% of the total prison population.

**Table 1: Annual Average Female Prison Population 1900-2012**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Female Prison Population: England and Wales</b>
1900	2,976
1910	2,581
1920	1,427
1930	785
1940	934
1950	1,107
1960	901
1970	988
1980	1,516
1990	1,597
2000	3,3,50
2001	3,740
2002	4,299
2003	4,425
2004	4,448
2005	4,467
2006	4,447

<sup>3</sup> The prison population has slightly declined since the end of 2011. At the end of March 2013 the prison population had decreased by about 3% since the previous year.

2007	4,374
2008	4,414
2009	4,283
2010	4,236
2011	4,188
2012	4,154

(Source: Berman and Dar 2013: 20, Table A)

Despite their relatively small proportion, the growing population of women prisoners has been the subject of much feminist criminological research on sentencing practices (e.g. Hedderman 2010; Gelsthorpe and Morris 2002; Carlen 1998). This has shown that apart from purely legal factors affecting the sentencing of women, decision-making in courts is also affected by the perception that magistrates and judges have of the women who appear before them. The criminological literature has interpreted these findings in terms of social constructions of femininity and the particularity of the information that is allowed or deemed relevant in courts (Worrall 1990). For instance, Ardener (1978) refers to a theory of mutedness, where women's defence in court is compromised owing to a lack of common language and understanding between women offenders and the courts' normative gendered values (1978: 21).

Studies into the sentencing of women have particularly emphasised the need to address 'notions of double deviance and double jeopardy' (Heidensohn and Silvestri 2012: 350), suggesting that women who offend are viewed and treated by the criminal justice system as both offenders and deviant women who have transgressed normative gender values. Consequently, women are subject to formal and informal controls which aim to discipline and change their offending as well as manage their gendered behaviour. Having said this, the increase of severity in the sentencing of women has been explained as a result of the diminishing differences in the social perception of men and women. Thus, feminist campaigns and the 'the search for equivalence' (Worrall 2002) in the treatment of male and female offenders is said to be partly responsible for a 'backlash' against women (Carlen 2002a; Carlen and Worrall 2004; Snider 2003; Chesney-Lind 2006) that is rooted in a rhetoric of punitiveness and 'responsibilisation' (Hannah-Moffat 2010) and has been used to perpetuate institutional sexism and racism (Chesney-Lind 2006).

#### *The criminal profile of women prisoners*

Irrespective of methods of measurement, women commit fewer crimes than men and the majority of women prisoners are serving short sentences (see **Table 2**). In 2012, for

example, 59% of women received into custody were serving six months or less (Ministry of Justice 2013c: Reception Table 2.1c). This is partly explained by the non-serious nature of most women's crimes. For instance, approximately 61% of the female prison population in 2012 was imprisoned for non-violent offences (see **Table 3**).

Moreover, 58% of women prisoners explain their offending in terms of lack of employment and access to appropriate skills outside prison (Ministry of Justice 2013d; see also Berman 2012). Imprisonment, however, rarely serves a rehabilitative purpose in this respect in that half (51%) of released women prisoners returned to prison within one year in 2011 and this figure increased to 62% for women serving short sentences of 12 months or less, and was highest (88%) amongst women who had served more than 10 prison sentences (Ministry of Justice 2013d: Table 2; see also Berman and Dar 2013). Nevertheless, the academic literature has traditionally claimed that women's reoffending rates are lower than those of men, and the existing evidence suggests that women have shorter criminal careers and commit less serious and less violent crimes; this has led researchers to conclude that imprisonment increases rather than decreases some women's potential to reoffend (Carlen and Worrall 2004).

**Table 2: Percentage of Male and Female Receptions into Custody by Sentence Length, 2012<sup>4</sup>**

<b>Sentence length</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Up to 6 months	47%	59%
Over 6 months - less than 12 months	10%	10%
Total under 12 months	57%	69%
Over 12 months – less than 4 years	31%	23%
Over 4 years – less than life	10%	5%
Life/Indeterminate	1%	<0.5%
<b>Total Sentenced</b>	19,704	1,905

(Source: Ministry of Justice 2013c: Reception Tables 2.1b and 2.1c).

<sup>4</sup> The annual average for 2012 was calculated based on quarterly statistics and rounded up/down to the nearest whole number. Fine Defaulters are excluded from the sentence categories but included in the total number of women sentenced.

**Table 3: Female Custodial Population by Offence, 2012<sup>5</sup>**

<b>Offence Type</b>	<b>Remand and Sentenced Population, 2012</b>	<b>Percentage of total women's offences</b>
Violence	1,098	27%
Sexual offences	98	2%
Robbery	397	8%
Burglary	258	4%
Theft, Handling Stolen Goods, Fraud, Forgery	836	20%
Drugs	651	16%
Motoring Offences	22	0.5%
Other offences and unrecorded	732	18%

(Source: Ministry of Justice 2013c: Population Table 1.3b).

#### *The demographic profile of the female prisoner population*

A large proportion of women in prison (around 40%) are relatively young, aged 30 or less. Although women aged over 40 are a minority, their population has increased. For instance, in March 2013 around 34% of women prisoners were aged over 40 compared with 29.5% aged over 40 in December 2011 (Ministry of Justice 2013c: Population Table A1.8). Similarly, the proportion of women aged over 50 increased between 2004 and 2011, and in 2013, 413 women (around 11%) were aged over 50 (Ministry of Justice 2013c: Population Table 1.1c).

A high proportion of female prisoners identify with an ethnic minority group or are foreign nationals. In relation to the general population there is a significant over-representation of ethnic minorities in women's prisons and in June 2012, 20% of the female prison population came from a Black and Minority Ethnic Group (BMEG) (Ministry of Justice 2013c: Population Table A1.7). In March 2013, 16% of the women's prison population were foreign nationals principally convicted of drugs offences and coming from Nigeria, Jamaica and South Africa<sup>6</sup> (Ministry of Justice 2013c: Population Table 1.6). Moreover, 16% of foreign national female prisoners are serving sentences for fraud and forgery offences, which usually relates to possession of false documents (Ministry of Justice 2012a).

<sup>5</sup> This data represents a snapshot from 30<sup>th</sup>, June 2012 including remand and immediate custodial sentence population statistics.

<sup>6</sup> The most common category of foreign national women (46%) is imprisoned for drug offences; this is comparatively higher than the 21% of English women prisoners serving drug offence sentences (Women in Prison 2012).



Although not necessarily sentenced for drugs offences, many women enter prison with serious drug abuse problems and, as the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) confirms, women prisoners report higher levels of Class A drug use than men (Ministry of Justice 2012a; 2012b). Furthermore, women prisoners tend to be the primary carers for children outside: almost half of the women's prison population are mothers and approximately 20% are lone parents (Ministry of Justice 2012a; Women in Prison 2012)<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, women's prison accommodation options are restricted because, unlike men, they are classified as either suitable for secure environments (closed prisons) or for open prisons; this means that there is an excess of secure accommodation for women and it has been argued that many women are kept in secure, closed prisons even though they pose no particular security threat (Carlen and Worrall 2004). The relatively small numbers of female prisons are geographically dispersed and women prisoners are often imprisoned far from their families and children. The average distance women are held from their home address is 55 miles compared to 48 miles for men (Prison Reform Trust 2012; Prison Service Order 2008). Moreover, approximately one third of women prisoners lose their homes and possessions whilst in prison partly because they are solely responsible for household care prior to their imprisonment (Women in Prison 2012). Evidently, the devastating effects of imprisonment are not limited to the daily deprivations women experience while in prison, and it is therefore important to consider the effects of imprisonment within their broader life narratives.

#### *The health of women prisoners and the experience of harm*

Women prisoners typically share similar socio-economic status and lifestyle experiences before entering the prison and their physical and mental health condition in prison has been associated with their pre-prison experiences (Plugge et al. 2006). Thus, arguably, the role of social class in studying the relationship between gender, body, and health is vital and as research indicates there is a causal link between poverty and illness (White et al. 2000). This causal link helps to partly explain why women's bodies are often unhealthy *before* entering the prison and how this exacerbates the painful effects of imprisonment. As sociologists of health and illness have shown, the contemporary model of health requires each individual to have the necessary material means with which to manage and prevent illness (Nettleton 2006; see Chapter 3). Healthy lifestyles are often difficult for women to access as health products and services have become increasingly commercialised

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<sup>7</sup> Findings (Ministry of Justice 2012d: 19-20) indicate that 64% of male prisoners' children – compared to 18% of female prisoners' children – were being cared for by the prisoner's partner at the time of their imprisonment; this reflects the differential impact of imprisonment on women as well as the children cared for by women prisoners.

and expensive. Also, as women prisoners explain, prior to imprisonment they are rarely concerned with their bodies and make few efforts to take care of their health (Plugge et al. 2006; see Chapters 5 and 7). Therefore, entering prison for many women is the first time they have routine access to health services, are encouraged to detoxify their bodies from addictions, have three meals a day and live in hygienic conditions.

Although the medical concept and measure of health has been challenged by sociologists of embodiment (e.g. Bendelow and Williams 1998; Nettleton 2006) such medical assessments can still provide useful data that reflects the *change* in women's bodies before, during and after imprisonment. The study by Plugge et al. (2006) recorded the health status of 500 women prisoners in England and Wales and revealed that women in prison were 5 times more likely to express a mental health concern than women in the general population. Upon reception into custody, 78% of the participants demonstrated some form of psychological disturbance, while 58% reported daily drug use within the six-month period before entering prison (Plugge et al. 2006: 57-61). The study showed that women enter prison in poor physical, psychological and social health, worse than the group of women in the general population classified with the poorest health, namely those in social class V (Plugge et al. 2006). Moreover, measurement of the prisoners' Body Mass Index (BMI) following different periods of imprisonment revealed that when entering the prison over one quarter of the women (n= 114, 26.5%) were underweight (2006: 45). The authors further explain:

Women tended to gain weight in prison. There was a statistically significant gain in weight in the first month; mean BMI on reception was 24.5 and one month later it was 25.0 ... the proportion of women who were underweight decreased but the proportion of overweight women increased. (Plugge et al. 2006: 45)

Weight-gain was also a common finding in the present thesis and will be explored in more detail in relation to the meanings that women attributed to it and how these perceptions changed over time (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Furthermore, female inmates are over-represented in prison suicides. Around 37% of all receptions admit attempting suicide at some point in their life and between 1991 and 2011 there were 92 self-inflicted deaths in women's prisons (compared with 72 suicides in men's prisons over the same period) (Ministry of Justice 2012b). Liebling (1994) argues that one of the reasons this gender difference occurs is that women prisoners, unlike men, express resistance through self-inflicted harm rather than inflicting harm on others. In other words, women's reaction to the 'pains of imprisonment' is often reflected in individualised acts, expressed *through* and *on* their own bodies. In 2011, there were 9,686 recorded

incidents of self-injury in women's prisons which accounted for almost 40% of all self-injury practices in English and Welsh prisons even though the women's prison population amounts to less than 5% of the overall prison population (Ministry of Justice 2012b: Table 3). In a recent inspection of HMP Bronzefield, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons reported 2,771 incidents of self-injury in a period of 12 months which amounts to more than 7 incidents per day (HM Inspector of Prisons 2012). This disproportionately high rate of self-mutilation most emphatically expresses the unique experience of punishment for women (Corston 2007; Liebling 1995; 1999). Research indicates that factors that elicit self-harming behaviour include past experiences of self-injury, histories of drug and alcohol addictions, mental and physical health and past experiences of sexual or physical abuse (Mackenzie et al. 2003; Roe-Sepowitz 2007). Given that these triggering characteristics apply to a large proportion of the women's prison population, identifying women who are *particularly* vulnerable to self-injury is inevitably difficult (see Liebling 1994).

More than half of all women in prison report experiences of domestic violence and one third have histories of sexual abuse (Women in Prison 2012; Sim 2009). Women's past experiences of abuse and trauma have been an important focus of many writers and activists in the field (see Carlen 1998; Howard League 1997; 2004; Prison Reform Trust 2012) and as this thesis indicates, they are critically important in understanding women's experience of imprisonment. As Baroness Corston (2007) reports, the over-representation of women in prison with ill health and histories of abuse is central in addressing their treatment by the criminal justice system:

It is clear to me that these biological factors have direct bearing on the way which women experience stressful events during their lives. Women's physical and emotional health and well-being is damaged by their experience within the criminal justice system in a way that differs from men's experiences and is beyond the comprehension of some men. (Corston 2007:5)

Researchers in the field broadly agree with the Corston Report's (2007:10) conclusion that: '[c]ommunity solutions for non-violent women offenders should be the norm'. Since the publication of the Corston Report, some efforts have been made to address its recommendations on the treatment of women in custody, but progress has been slow and alternatives to imprisonment have not been fully embraced by the courts. In consequence, the numbers of women in prison remain high and the implications of their imprisonment remain problematic (Player 2013; Justice Committee Report 2013).

### ***Why study prisoner experiences through the lens of the body?***

In a sense, the justification for an embodied perspective in the study of lived experience is straightforward. We all have a body<sup>8</sup> and everything we do daily, we do with our body. We see the world through our bodies and the world sees us through our bodies. We are more conscious of our bodies at some times than at others and sometimes we perform “bodily routines” automatically. Some of us may struggle more with our bodies and may need help from the bodies of others to perform certain tasks. Preparing for every new daily routine requires preparing our bodies to appear in public: we may groom our bodies, dress our bodies, and in so doing we may inspect our bodies and notice changes in our external appearance. We may try to conceal bodily changes, or we may welcome them. What is implicitly understood is that *changing bodies* can affect our self-identities, daily performances and interactions (Shilling 2008).

The level of attention and awareness we have of our body depends on our social context and life experiences. A teenager is likely to be highly sensitive to the biological changes of her body and its appearance. This in turn, may affect her body-image and consequently her self-perception and sense of being. Similarly, an ageing body may be experienced with fear of mortality, distress about the future and an eagerness to manage the passage of time. Everyday life relies, therefore, on the constant construction and performance of interactive bodies.

Given the centrality of the body to everyday life, and the fact that it is something that all humans share, it is perhaps surprising that there has been so little empirical investigation onto the body as it is experienced by human beings, who both *have* and *are* bodies. In particular, there has been little research which involves engaging ordinary men and women in talk about their personal bodily experiences. (Nettleton and Watson 1998: 2, emphasis in the original)

Sociologists have argued that modern governments and social networks rely on the control of bodies (Turner 1984). Indeed, our late-modern societies have been described as ‘somatic societies’ (Turner 1992: 12-13) relying on the presentation, alternation, management and ordering of bodies. Therefore, the thesis suggests that studying the late-modern prison within its context requires a fresh outlook on the practices and attitudes that characterise life in consumerist societies, in which bodies are arguably ascribed a central role by social structures, institutions and individuals. The thesis draws a picture of the politics of everyday life as seen through embodied experience and uses this to understand the impact of punishment on women’s self-perceptions.

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<sup>8</sup> The singular and the plural for the terms “body” and “identity” are used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

For instance, if we can claim one certainty about all prisoners it is that they all have a body which is vital to the constitution of the prison environment and the infliction of punishment. Thus, through existing research we know (somewhat indirectly) that the prisoner's body is central for the delivery of punishment (Howe 1994; Foucault 1979); but it is also imperative to its experience (e.g. Smith 2002; Frigon 2007). Inmates' imprisonment is realised through their physical incapacitation inside an enclosed space; their bodies are locked up, are regulated, medicalised and stigmatised, their bodies are "doing time". These prisoner bodies follow and forge the prison's daily routine and timetable, they sleep in cells and eat prison food, they detoxify from addictions and some of them initiate violent assaults on others, practice self-defence and self-injury in prison. Some of these bodily practices are prison-specific, whereas others relate to broader structural dynamics and informal pressures to conform.

The thesis explores the varying impacts – positive and negative – that the structures and inmate culture of contemporary women's prisons have on incarcerated women. In determining these impacts, it explores how prisoner agency – observed through acts of resistance and coping – interacts with prison regulations and corrective techniques to transform the corporeal identities of women. To do this, it engages in an inter-disciplinary dialogue between theories of the sociology of embodiment, feminist theory and theories of women's imprisonment. Revisiting feminist perspectives on both women's bodies and women's imprisonment, I show how the female body is affected by the interaction between gender, identity and punishment and suggest that the fluidity and complexity of identity in the late-modern prison context can only be fully understood through a corporeally sensitive perspective on subjectivity. Following from its main argument, this thesis demonstrates the physicality of women's punishment and illustrates the gendered nature of both punishment and resistance as they are expressed from and upon the body.

In other words, I argue that prisons research, can consider the lived body as an investigative device. I display the body's relevance by exploring women's bodily identities during and after custody, concluding that embodied experiences of imprisonment not only shed light on what it *feels* like to be a prisoner, but also act as a starting point in understanding the emotional constituents of punishment (Garland 2001).

### ***How can we study prisoner experiences through an embodied perspective?***

Given that the aim of this research is to investigate how the body is *experienced* inside prison, the thesis considers the phenomenological paradigm to be the most appropriate

approach and it suggests that the empirical study of embodied experience requires a reflexive-embodied account (Crossley 2006). Having said this, the study also acknowledges that research ought to be informed by a ‘pragmatist’ perspective and therefore, it also considers the relevance of other theoretical perspectives. As Turner (1992) explains:

The epistemological standpoint, theoretical orientation and methodological technique which a social scientist adopts, should at least be determined by the nature of the problem and by the level of explanation which is required. (Turner 1992: 57)

Broadly, the position adopted by this thesis belongs to the pragmatist tradition taken on by interactionist perspectives (Cooley 1992; Mead 1934). Influenced by Heidegger’s (1962) focus on the experience of being in the world, contemporary pragmatism emphasises the idea that individuals are active agents and the world both shapes individuals’ actions and, at the same time, is created by individual activity. As Waskul and Vannini (2006) explain, pragmatism places ‘a determined emphasis on how subjectivity, meaning and consciousness do not exist prior to experience, but are emergent in action and interaction’ (2006: 3). Pragmatism however, is not a “unified body” of a single philosophical idea. Interactionists explain their assumptions in diverse ways, ranging through symbolic interactionism, social semiotics, narrative and life history, phenomenology and dramaturgy (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 3). Chapters 2 and 3 consider the phenomenological, symbolic interactionist and dramaturgical perspective in particular, and through its methodology (Chapter 4), the thesis borrows aspects from the narrative/life history perspective.

Interactionists understand bodies in a diverse and pluralist manner and according to them bodies are not real, fixed empirical concepts. The interactionist tradition understands the body as:

[...] more than a tangible, physical, corporeal object ... [It] is also an enormous vessel of meaning of utmost significance to both personhood and society. The body is a *social* object. (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 3; emphasis added)

Derived from this conceptualisation, the term “embodiment” expresses precisely how the body-as- object is inseparable from the body-as-subject. Embodiment, therefore, is a concept which refers ‘to the process by which the object-body is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and/or transformed as a subject-body’ (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 3).

The thesis empirically investigates the particular effects of imprisonment on women’s appearance, health, body-image, and overall presentation of self during and after imprisonment (Chapters 5-7). This was achieved through a qualitative study comprising interviews with 24 female ex-prisoners and 16 long-answer, written responses from female prisoners at HMP Bronzefield (posted questionnaires). Key themes that arise include how

prisoners' bodies change when they are in custody. This leads to a discussion of how the impact of prison rehabilitation, detoxification and health treatment contribute towards an ambivalent, uncertain sense of self, offering women the opportunity for a "fresh start" but also compromising this by the prison's focus on punishment and risk management (Chapter 5). The empirical findings of this study also focus on the role of physical appearance and performance in custody, emphasising the symbolic and practical function of clothing and other material props in prison. These findings allude to the significance of appropriate physical appearance, both to promote inclusion into inmate culture, and to divert harsh treatment from prison staff (Chapter 6). Finally, empirical data illustrates how prison food, drug use and self-injury are all significant strategies of emotion management and are central in surviving the 'pains of imprisonment' (Chapter 7).

### ***The thesis: structure and summary***

This thesis contributes to the criminological and sociological study of imprisonment through the empirical implementation of a new theoretical perspective for the study of women's experiences of imprisonment. This perspective is relevant in that it addresses limitations in the exiting literature that have acknowledged the need for a more affective, emotionally aware sociology of imprisonment that can explore more concretely what imprisonment feels like, and in so doing, can contribute towards a more influential critique of penal harm (Bosworth 1999; Bosworth et. al 2005; Liebling 1999; Liebling and Maruna 2005; Jewkes 2012a). Further, the analysis contributes a feminist critique of penalty that incorporates the call for a dialogue between feminist theoretical analyses of discipline and social control and mainstream accounts of imprisonment and punishment (Howe 1994:2-3).

The thesis starts with a review of the existing literature on the aims of imprisonment, the experience of imprisonment and the feminist contribution to studies of women's punishment. I suggest in Chapter 1 that the body has been ignored in many of these analyses mainly because the criminological study of the prison is inherently a masculinist and at heart, a positivist endeavour. I argue that studies of imprisonment often approach the prisoner from a Cartesian, dualist perspective that focuses on the prisoner's mind rather than her body, assuming that the two are separable. Chapter 1 therefore sets out the existing landscape of research relevant to this thesis' subject matter. The following chapter presents the theoretical framework of the research that derives from the sociology of embodiment and emotions. It explains the inspiration for the study and justifies the reasoning behind its focus on the embodied and emotional elements of women's imprisonment. Chapter 3 expands the thesis's theoretical framework into a review of feminist accounts on embodiment. It

highlights the relevance of feminist theory in understanding central themes on women's embodied identities and lived experiences. Chapters 2 and 3 draw a theoretical account of the body in modern, consumer society as means of expression, representation and self-perception. These chapters argue that a post-Cartesian, body-centred perspective is necessary for a more nuanced understanding of women's lived experiences under the gaze of penal power. Chapter 4 outlines the main steps and methods I employed to conduct empirical research. It also considers the epistemological and methodological foundations of the thesis, which are derived from feminist, phenomenological and psychoanalytic theoretical perspectives.

From here, the following three chapters outline the findings of the empirical study which are considered in relation to the argument introduced in the earlier chapters. Chapter 5 explains how the prisoner's *changing and ambivalent body*, as a direct outcome of imprisonment, can express the dynamic and complex relationship between body and punishment. Chapters 6 and 7 explore in depth the consequences that a constantly changing body has for the construction and maintenance of self-identities. Specifically, Chapter 6 reviews findings on the "look" of the body and the management of physical appearance within the restricted and complex politics of imprisonment. Chapter 7, in contrast, considers bodily coping strategies employed by the participants and suggests that whilst the 'pains of imprisonment' are embodied, so too are the emotions of imprisonment. All three chapters illustrate how the body reappears and becomes central to the attention and awareness of women during their period of imprisonment.

I argue throughout the thesis that women prisoners' bodies and their experiences can illustrate their *double oppression*: from outside prison as women and subjected to gendered controls; and from within the prison as harmed and stigmatised prisoners. I argue that while dominant prisons research invites a subjective, emotional examination of the prison context, it still remains distant from the theoretical tradition that has developed what I consider to be the most elaborate and proficient understandings of subjectivity, representation and affect: feminist theory. I try to work within and outside feminist theory to bring these fields into what I believe to be a necessary and fruitful dialogue (Howe 1994).



# Chapter 1

## Reading disembodied experiences: The literature on women prisoners and the ‘pains of imprisonment’

[...] In every industrial society, this institution has become the dominant punitive instrument to such an extent that prisons and punishment are commonly regarded as almost synonymous. (Melossi and Pavarini 1981:1)

Prison is all about pain – the pain of separation and loss, the wrench of restricted contact in the context of often fragile relationships, of human failings and struggles. David Garland has argued that imprisonment has an expressive or an emotional function – why is this (to me, obvious) emotional function of prison so invisible in most empirical research? (Liebling 1999: 165)

The overall aim of this chapter is to explore how women’s imprisonment – and the experience of imprisonment more broadly – has been addressed within the relevant literature. It tackles some theoretical gaps found in existing research and argues that these can be bridged with a study of embodiment in prison. The first gap relates to the unexplored extent to which the ‘pains of imprisonment’ affect prisoners’ bodies. I argue that the prisoner’s body is one of the prison’s key punitive and corrective targets and one of the prisoner’s main means of coping with the experience of imprisonment. Therefore, I suggest that the study of the ‘pains of imprisonment’ should involve an investigation of how prison experiences are embodied (i.e. inscribed *on* the body and reflected *through* the body). This, and the following two chapters, suggest that a feminist sociology of embodiment is a relevant theoretical framework for a more complete and *affective* study of the ‘pains of imprisonment’.

This chapter also addresses a second gap specific to the literature on women prisoners. Expanding on Howe’s (1994) critique, I argue that the punishment-body relation has not been fully addressed by feminist studies of imprisonment. In not addressing the experiences of women prisoners as reflexively embodied, feminist criminologists have partially neglected the extent and consequences of women’s self-expressions and self-perceptions. As earlier feminist criminology has concluded, the social control of women within the criminal justice system should be informed by a wider understanding of women’s multiple oppressions (Heidensohn 1985; 1996; Hannah-Moffat 2010), and it is argued here that the function of the gendered *lived body* is essential in understanding these wider structures of social control as they interact with the experience of punishment.

The chapter starts with a brief review of the main objectives and justifications for imprisonment and connects this with relevant penological shifts in the treatment of women

in prison. The aims of imprisonment are considered under a concise discussion of the public perception and “emotionalisation” of punishment, the legitimization of prisons and the dynamics of power within them, and the paradox of the “healthy prison”. As an example of the complex aims being put into place in current penal policy and practice, I consider penological shifts as exemplified in Rock’s (1996) history of HMP Holloway and the debate on women’s needs/risks (Hannah-Moffat 2001; Hayman 2006). The following section looks at the micro-politics of prisoner experiences and engages with some classical studies of the experience of imprisonment as well as current debates on the effects of imprisonment. Within this, I consider the concept of the ‘pains of imprisonment’ (Sykes 1958) and I engage with a call made in the field of prison studies, inviting a study of imprisonment that reflexively accounts for the emotionally harmful effects of custodial sentences (Jewkes 2012a; Bosworth et al. 2005; Liebling 1999). This is followed by a review of the feminist agenda on imprisonment, focusing mainly on two pieces of research. The first is Carlen’s (1983; 1998) work on the gendered discipline of women in prison and the second is Bosworth’s (1999) research on the gendered identities and resistance of women prisoners (see also Eaton 1993). Considering the contributions and limitations of these and other feminist works, I go on to evaluate Howe’s (1994) theorisation of penalty and embrace her invitation to consider the punishment-body relation. The last section of this chapter considers what we still need to know in order to understand *affectively* women’s embodied experiences during and after prison. I review research that has focused on the prisoner’s body, but argue that a phenomenological account of the *body-as-subject* can expand our existing knowledge of the imprisoned body as the object of disciplinary technologies. This suggests that a dialogue between feminist and typically “masculinist” accounts of imprisonment will allow for a fresh understanding of identity and lived experience in prison which can pave the way for a more emotionally aware and reflexive study of imprisonment and its harmful effects.

### **1.1 Penological shifts and the aims of imprisonment in the context of power, resistance and legitimacy**

#### ***Why do we punish and what are prisons for?***

Imprisonment is imposed non-consensually, it infringes many human rights and it can have extremely harmful effects (Liebling 1995). For this reason, the concept of punishment and its materialization into imprisonment serves a complex and arguably objectionable social function which, since its inception, has had to be repeatedly justified and its legitimacy has been constantly negotiated.

Most justifications for the existence of the prison can be summarised within the framework of seven key objectives: expiation, denunciation, retribution, general and individual deterrence, incapacitation/public protection, reform and rehabilitation (Carlen and Worrall 2004). As these objectives adopt a teleological approach, it has been argued that proponents of the prison neglect repeated assessments that prison does not and cannot meet a synthesis of (all) these objectives without, in practice, prioritising one over the other (see. Mathiesen 2000). For instance, in the reality of everyday life in prison, objectives that aim to stop crime, such as reform or rehabilitation, can become secondary to security priorities and cost limitations. Moreover, the prison's overall social impact is more complex than these objectives indicate. For example, upon release, prisoners' socio-economic disadvantage and social isolation (in many instances caused or worsened by imprisonment) contribute to a perpetuation of criminal lifestyles, regardless of rehabilitative programmes and training opportunities made available during imprisonment. Therefore, critics of the prison have argued that it not only fails to be a solution, but it also contributes to the exacerbation of the 'crime problem' (Muncie 2001; Sim 2009).

In *Prison on Trial*, Mathiesen (2000) challenges the main justifications for imprisonment (rehabilitation, deterrence, and incapacitation), arguing that none of these objectives can be empirically justified. He uses statistical evidence to show that rehabilitative programmes in prison do not contribute to a decline in recidivism and he suggests that the institutional features of the prison (such as security measures, and cultures of bullying and violence) undermine rehabilitative treatment and render it ineffective. Moreover, examining statistical data and penological arguments regarding prisons' deterrent effect, Mathiesen (2000) concludes that:

[...] all available research results, as well as international comparisons show that the development of crime is not related in any definite way to the level maintained in the number of incarcerations and their length. (Mathiesen 2000: 84)

He argues that the moral and symbolic deterrent effects that imprisonment is believed to have are not evidenced in practice. Turning to the objective of incapacitation, Mathiesen distinguishes two issues: the first concerns the practical and methodological problem of accurately predicting the likelihood of future offending in relation to any specific individual. The second issue is one of principle. He argues that it is impossible to justify actuarial punishment (i.e. estimating one's future criminality based on a past offence) from an ethical perspective, and adds that this moral issue 'becomes more acute' when the people 'sentenced to a large extent are poor, socially handicapped and stigmatised' (2000: 95). Summing up, Mathiesen argues that the prison is a ludicrous failure, failing to meet its own

stated objectives. Moreover, it could be said that the harmful effects of a custodial sentence can be traced back to the very justifications and objectives of imprisonment. This is significant for this thesis because it raises the question of *intentionality*; namely, questioning whether the prison's painful effects are intended outcomes of the objectives of imprisonment (and therefore are inevitable), or whether these 'pains of imprisonment' are indirect/unintended consequences of a failing prison system.

### *The neo-liberal prison and the new penology*

One of the most dominant contemporary debates in the sociology of punishment concerns the penological shift at the end of the twentieth century from penal welfarism (referred to as the "old" penology) to a neoliberal climate that is punitive and focuses on security, control and risk management (referred to as the "new" penology) (Feeley and Simon 1994). In his discussion of recent penal changes in the UK and the US, Garland (2001) argues that in the past thirty years penal policy has returned to a "just deserts" approach where retribution is the predominant goal (2001: 9). This re-legitimisation of retributive purposes has allowed for politicians to express more 'punitive sentiments' and for legislators to enact 'more draconian laws' (2001: 9). Garland (2001) explores changes in emotional attitudes to crime and justice in the period from penal-welfarism (prevalent between the 1920s-1970s) to the period after the 1980s where fear, as a result of political strategy, became a dominant cultural sentiment. He explains:

Throughout the period when the penal-welfare framework prevailed [...] [t]he affect invoked to justify penal reforms was most often a progressive sense of justice, an evocation of what 'decency' and 'humanity' required and a compassion for the needs and rights of the less fortunate [...] Since the 1970s fear of crime has come to have new salience. What was once regarded as a localised, situational anxiety, afflicting the worst-off individuals and neighbourhoods, has come to be regarded as a major social problem [...] this sense of fearful, angry, public has had a large impact upon the style and content of policy making in recent years. Crime has been re-dramatised. (Garland 2001: 10)

Therefore, the current penal climate appears to be driven more by public belief and less by trust in relevant expertise and optimism in the potential to reform offenders. The old idea that the causes of crime lie in the offender's socio-economic conditions and reflect social disadvantage is now challenged by stereotypical assumptions regarding "dangerous" groups and classes, such as "unruly youth" and "incorrigible career criminals" (Box 2001). In line with this more fearful and punitive perspective there is also a renewed interest in the idea of 'born criminals' and biological determinism (Farrall and Lee 2008). Overall, it could be argued that as a reflection of many of these stereotypes, current policy in crime control calls upon the public's *feelings* of insecurity and expresses a demand for harsh and exclusionary

punishments. Therefore, the ‘hegemonic’ domination of the idea of the prison (Sim 2009: 129) lies partly in its *emotional* resonance with the public’s perception of crime and criminality.

The prison appears to provide the public with a secure and, ironically, easy solution to acts of injustice, invoking a much-needed sense of satisfaction and the illusion of efficiency. Although rehabilitative programmes still exist, it has been argued that the late-modern prison’s main purpose is that of incapacitating offenders and segregating them from society (Garland 2001). According to this observation, we can deduce that the experience of punishment is felt mostly as an experience of isolation, control and stigmatisation (see Chapters 5-7).

The prison is used today as a kind of reservation, a quarantine zone in which purportedly dangerous individuals are segregated in the name of public safety. Those offenders who are released into the community are subject to much tighter control than previously. (Garland 2001: 177-178)

Whilst acting as a space for segregation, the prison also has a function of *identification*, providing the symbolic border between citizen and other and, through its stigmatising elements, defining both those within and those outside its walls (see also Sim 2009).

For this reason, a more emotionally aware perspective on the experience of imprisonment is necessary in order to alter the sentiments inherent in current crime control policy and public perceptions of crime and punishment (Loader 2005; Liebling 1999). Some criminological research has already suggested we engage with the making and expressing of the emotions that contribute towards such punitive attitudes (e.g. de Haan and Loader 2002; Katz 2002; Loader 2005). If understood and studied as key determinants of perception, knowledge and attitude (Katz 2002; Maruna and King 2008), these emotional demands for punishment could be used in a strategy of “redirection”, whereby negative emotions are turned into sensitive responses that focus on reconciliation and compassion (Loader 2005). It is suggested here that an *affective* sociology of the ‘pains of imprisonment’ would contribute towards this criminological turn to emotions.

In *Reconstructing a Women’s Prison*, Rock (1996) captures the impact of the transition from the old to the new penological model in the plans for the reconstruction of Holloway prison in the period between the 1960s and 1980s. Rock explores how the vulnerabilities and needs of women were seen in the 1960s from a medicalised, treatment-based perspective that led to the decision in 1967 to build a new establishment for women with an architectural design that would not resemble that of a prison. The typical image of

the female inmate of the time was that of a pathologised, mad and sad woman in need of help and correction (Heidensohn 1981; Dobash et al. 1986). From the inside, this new establishment would be designed as a 'therapeutic continuum', with small and flexible units that would encourage the inmate's moral reform and treatment. From the outside, the new Holloway would resemble a 'secure hospital' which could eventually be passed on to the administration of the Health Service. This project underwent severe delays which 'propelled it through a series of intellectual and penological regimes and under the control of a succession of groups of officials' (Rock 1996: 10). The delays meant that the completion of the new Holloway in 1985 took place in a very different penological environment from that which prevailed when the project was conceived in the 1960s. The conflict in penological ideas was reflected in the very physicality of the new Holloway prison, where spaces that were initially built with a therapeutic ideal in mind were now used as spaces for secure regulation and control, resulting in a series of disorder problems reflecting the inmates' (and staff's) discontent with the establishment. It is therefore, important to bear in mind that the treatment of women prisoners today is built upon a variety of *conflicting objectives*.

The manifestation of these competing penological aims and the problems they impelled is exemplified in Paul Rock's description of C1, the unit for 'disturbed prisoners' at Holloway. Located on the lowest floor of the prison, C1 is now known as one of 'the most oppressive units in the most dismal part of the whole labyrinthine structure of Holloway' (Rock: 273). Informants described it as claustrophobic and depressing, dark and damp, dirty, smelly and noisy. Indeed the Principal Medical Officer of the prison in 1986 'claimed that confinement to so dreadful a place was actually a form of torture' (Rock: 274). The unit's population mostly comprised inmates remanded for medical reports and, as one prison psychiatrist expressed, C1 'regularly had a population of some of the most personality-damaged and dangerous young women... [which meant that] the staff were terrified of them' (Rock: 275). The inability to cater for this population's treatment needs as well as the security threat these women were seen to pose, resulted in a threefold response. First, the women in C1 were denied access to other premises of the prison and were mostly isolated in their cells, making limited contact with staff and having no access to recreation, programmes or nursing care. This strategy of lock-up resulted in violence among the inmates and self-harm incidents. The second strategy employed by prison staff was wide-spread resort to medication, aimed at sedating the prisoners. As a result, such excess use of drugs affecting the central nervous system 'may well have distorted the behaviour of the inmates, making them even more bizarre in their conduct' (Rock: 277). The third strategy employed by prison officials was disciplinary and punitive. This included the loss of various privileges,

including 'the loss of tobacco, earnings or a radio, the loss of remission, and the loss of association, that is solitary confinement' (Rock: 277). As a result women who faced mental health problems were being punished instead of treated and were disciplined for violations to rules they often could not even comprehend. In other words, C1 was set up on the basis of a series of ambiguities and shifting penological perspectives. Such ambiguities challenged whether a unit for mentally disturbed individuals could be operated under a system that 'presupposed responsibility and intentionality' and it put into question the priorities of the prison challenging whether such a unit should be managed by therapeutic staff or disciplinary staff (Rock: 281).

### *The prisoners' legitimisation of the prison*

Even though imprisonment continues to be justified by its ability to incapacitate dangerous offenders, and its (disproven) potential to rehabilitate and deter future offending, the literature on prisons emphasises that the maintenance of the prison system also relies on its constant legitimisation by those it confines. The "problem of order" and legitimacy have been central issues within the micro-politics of the prison, where the coercive and authoritative power of prisons (through the regime and staff) has been extensively explored (Sparks and Bottoms 1995; Bosworth 1996; Bosworth 1999; Bosworth and Carrabine 2001; Carrabine 2005; Crewe 2011). The legitimacy of power relations within prisons (between staff, between staff and inmates and between inmates) has been examined to show that power in prison is negotiated and is not purely enforced in a binary of custodians and captives (Sparks and Bottoms 1995; Bosworth and Carrabine 2001). The concept of legitimacy is used in these analyses to explain the criteria which prisons must meet in order to manage the prisoners within them, and to justify their captivity to those outside.

Sparks and Bottoms (1995) identify four elements of the prison that need to be fulfilled for it to maintain order and compliance; these are all based on the idea that prisons exercise coercion through legitimization:

Amongst these one would certainly have to include the centrality of fair procedures and ...consistent outcomes. A third component concerns the quality of behaviour of officials ... Fourthly, it seems likely - and as Woolf would certainly concur with this view - that the basic regime of the institution, its accommodation, services and activities may itself be regarded as illegitimate in failing to meet commonly expected standards. (Sparks and Bottoms 1995: 55)

The authors conclude that, in order to acquire legitimacy, prisons need to achieve certain standards of procedural justice and personal, human relations with prisoners. This idea of legitimacy relies on morally justifying their treatment to the prisoners (1995: 58) and the

main basis for the justification of the prison today, is that it is considered to be a *humane* punishment that does not, at least obviously, violate our liberal principles and ethics. As a consequence, any exposure of instances of damaging punishment could put into question the prison's legitimacy and justifications.

Expanding further the legitimacy debate, Bosworth and Carrabine (2001: 504) suggest prisoner resistance shows that power is relational and not absolute. These fluid and changing dynamics of power relations require an understanding of the strategies of prisoners' resistance in prisons, along with an evaluation of aspects of identity (such as gender, sexuality, class and race) that can affect the management of power relations. The authors draw on aspects of personal identity which the prisoners bring with them into prison from outside, and on which they rely to give legitimacy to their imprisonment and to manage their relations in prison. They illustrate that legitimacy and order in prisons are concepts that are socio-culturally and economically constructed and require an understanding of the prisoners' wider identities beyond the prison. Thus, the unfixed nature of power and its negotiation inside prison imply that prisons' purpose and preservation in our societies are highly contingent on both external influences and internal relations in prison.

Using the concept of resistance as a form and use of power, Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) further argue that acts of resistance can be indicative of the micro-politics of the prison, even if they are not directly intended as political demonstrations of protest by the inmates. They suggest that we need to go beyond the assumption that those prisoners who do not challenge prison authority necessarily accept the prison's legitimacy, implying that prison affects prisoners differently and invokes different reactions from them. The authors conclude by suggesting that sociologists of imprisonment should understand prisoners as 'agents, who, to some extent at least, make choices and actively negotiate power relations' (2001: 512). This is a valuable perspective, as it challenges the 'tendency to view power in prisons as conditioned by an all-or-nothing set of binary relations' (2001: 513) and implies the importance of investigating the small-scale politics of the prison from the prisoners' perspective. More importantly for the purposes of this thesis, Bosworth and Carrabine's (2001) paper conceptualises resistance in prison as 'subjective identity' and suggests that actions and life in prison are partly affected by prisoners' identities (2001:513). The awareness, therefore, which the prisoners have as active subjects, and arguably their awareness as *active embodied beings*, is central in understanding the dynamics of punishment.



### ***The “healthy prison”: A realistic objective?***

A concept that has featured in policy and research within penological debates is that of the “healthy prison”. More than a decade ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) started promoting, through the concept of the “healthy prison”, the idea that prisons can and should be healthy<sup>9</sup> environments. In England and Wales, this concept was established through policy in 1999 following the Inspectorate of Prisons’ Thematic Review *Suicide is Everyone’s Concern*. The review reflected on research arguing that suicide in prison is correlated with the prison environment and not only related to the individual’s psychological problems (Liebling 1995). The thematic review derived four elements that should constitute the “healthy prison”: first, ‘a safe environment’; second, the treatment of inmates with respect; third, ‘a full, constructive and purposeful regime’; and finally, the offer of ‘resettlement training to prevent reoffending’ (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 1999: 57). In his review, the Chief Inspector concluded that the concept of the “healthy prison” ought to be used as a model for measuring the quality of life and conditions in prisons. For this reason, these four elements of the “healthy prison” were seen as a move towards a re-legitimisation and preservation of the prison under more humane regimes.

Although Carlen (2001) does not engage directly with this concept, in her discussion of suicide and self-injury in prison, she calls for a ‘holistic’ approach to the treatment of women (see also Corston 2007) which focuses not only on women who are declared to be ‘at risk’ of harming themselves, but on the whole prison population including its staff. Thus, she urges penal policy to treat prisoners with respect, not as a means to an end (i.e. to reduce reoffending), but as a moral duty. Through this critique we can see the underlying implications of the model of the “healthy prison” which, in its pledge of humane treatment, legitimates imprisonment by focusing its priorities and treatment on risk prevention (see pages 33-34).

Catrin Smith (2002) offers another important critique of the concept of “healthy prisons” that is more specific to the provision of health in women’s prisons. Smith proposes that the objective of the “healthy prison” is a contradiction in terms. She argues that in the prison, where the prisoner’s body becomes the ‘object of external forces’ (2002: 197), food and medication acquire a new, elevated role: they are treated by the inmates as a means of control, pleasure, resistance and rebellion (2002: 197). In light of these findings, Smith argues that we ought to redefine what it means to be healthy *in the prison context* and this,

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<sup>9</sup> The World Health Organization defines health as: ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity’ (WHO 1946: 100).

she explains, should be reflected in health promotion policies. She suggests that health policy in prisons should not be delivered by the same people who are responsible for the punishment and control of prisoners. Further, the relationship between control, resistance and health, should be reconsidered away from the ideal of “healthy prisons” which to an extent seems to combine punitive and rehabilitative elements to satisfy a populist politics. As the next section demonstrates, in practice, this synthesis has caused more problems than it has solved.

As we have seen, women and men are sent to prison as punishment, but paternalistic and maternalistic beliefs have also claimed that offenders, and particularly female offenders, should be imprisoned ‘for their own good’ (Carlen 1998). Imprisonment, in this context, has been seen as a chance to correct women’s health, behaviour and attitudes, reminiscent of other regulatory institutions like schools or hospitals (see also Heidensohn 1981; 1996; Dobash et al. 1986). The prison’s role still remains twofold: it punishes the offender and simultaneously attempts to “correct” her, either through feminisation, education or detoxification from addictions or through the promotion of ‘healthier life-styles’ (Carlen 1998; Smith 2000; 2002). Having said this, most research and inquiries into women’s imprisonment have critically pointed to the inappropriateness of the prison in fulfilling these roles, particularly in addressing women’s needs (e.g. Gelsthorpe 2006; Hannah-Moffat 2001; Carlen 1983; 1998; HMCIP 1997; Wedderburn Report 2000; Social Exclusion Unit Report 2002; Fawcett Report 2004; Corston Report 2007; Gelsthorpe et. al 2007; HMCIP 2011).

Using the theoretical model of populist punitiveness, Hudson (2002), Worrall (2002) and Hannah-Moffat (2001) explain that the old penological justifications for imprisonment have been used by new penology policies to justify the imprisonment of increasing numbers of women for minor crimes (see also Carlen and Worrall 2004). This has occurred while the objectives of the new penology remain centred on security and control. The following section draws mainly on Canadian literature to explore the treatment of women prisoners under an agenda that aimed to manage risks to security and control by tackling the particular “needs” of women in prisons.

### ***The needs/ risks model: Relating penological shifts to women’s imprisonment***

Hudson (2002) argues that the concept of social “need” was reinterpreted by the new penology (Feeley and Simon 1994), to imply that more women needed to be imprisoned. She explains that the concept of “needs” was used in the penal-welfare system to justify why certain women should *not* be imprisoned. In contrast, women’s needs in the current

discourse are defined in relation to their risk of recidivism, which results in a perception that these women “need” imprisonment in order to eliminate the threat of reoffending. Moreover, Hannah-Moffat (2001) argues that new penological policy reinterprets feminist and anti-racist discourses so that, for example, the feminist emphasis in the 1990s on gender equality in the criminal justice system, resulted in more women being imprisoned on grounds of “gender blind” sentencing that neglected the differential needs and circumstances of male and female offenders (see also Worrall 2002; Snider 2003).

For example, since the 1990s, a neo-liberal model of governance has affected women’s treatment in Canadian prisons. *Creating Choices*, a task force composed of feminist and anti-racist reformers, proposed the development of a ‘women-centred approach guided by five principles: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environment, and shared responsibility’ (Frigon 2007: 241; see also Hayman 2006). The task force aimed to tackle the difficulties inherent in the old system of overcrowded, geographically remote, high-security prisons which did not offer women adequate training and treatment opportunities. The construction of five new establishments under the task force, intended to offer small, cottage-style houses for women (Hayman 2006). Although noble in its intentions, the *Creating Choices* model ultimately failed in its ambitions. After several incidents, including suicide attempts, self-injury, staff assaults and the murder of a prisoner by another inmate, a “U-turn” in penal policy was made, emphasising a greater reliance on security. This represented a significant shift from the initial vision of the task force, translating the discourse of women’s needs to mean the *risks* that women could pose in the future.

Paradoxically, this risk-focused approach (Hannah-Moffat 2001) emphasises the notion of women’s empowerment as part of a process of self-regulation which enables the prison to achieve higher levels of control. As Hannah-Moffat explains:

[u]nder a new, self-governing regime of empowerment, the authorities can regulate women through the decisions the women themselves make, without resorting to overt expressions of power. The new technologies steer choices and prevent misbehaviour, instead of deterring through punishment. (Hannah-Moffat 2001: 173)

Although the concept of the self-regulating prisoner is hardly new (see Foucault 1979), the idea that creating choices for women to empower them in prison became a new method for *justifying* the continued and increasing use of imprisonment, not only in Canada but elsewhere, including England and Wales. Hannah-Moffat (2001) has observed that the new penological strategies are more regulative than punitive (i.e. they intend for women to

practice self-discipline), and that the *experience* of imprisonment reflects a blurring between discipline and punishment.

Hayman (2006) criticises the landmark report *Creating Choices* for failing to consider sufficiently women's security needs, their behavioural problems and for neglecting to offer a proposal on 'hard to manage' prisoners. She concludes that these failings can be attributed to the task force's assumption that imprisoned women are victims, presuming thus, that they lack agency. Her study into the implications of the *Creating Choices* model, warns that reformers' temptation to cooperate with prison authorities to bring about change are bound to fail because a main and unavoidable feature of the prison is that it damages those it incarcerates. This international literature highlights the universality of the issues discussed in this thesis. A "global" perspective helps demonstrate a broader lack of awareness in regards to women's subjectivity and embodied identities in other jurisdictions, emphasising that even when a 'women centred' or gender-aware perspective is attempted, the punitive and disciplinary aims of imprisonment prevail over other objectives.

Having said this, many of the themes raised in research focused on other jurisdictions can also be found in recent developments in women's prisons in England and Wales. In the most recent *Women's Custodial Estate Review* (NOMS 2013), we see on the one hand an attempt to recognize some of Baroness Corston's underlying arguments and recommendations, while at the same time, the document emphasises a needs/risks framework through which to address the diverse population of the women's prison estate. In other words, a combination of care and security objectives deployed through custodial regimes remains the priority of the government, without any substantial evidence suggesting a shift of paradigm in this area.

Notwithstanding this, the review puts a focus on women's resettlement needs announcing that all women's establishments are to become resettlement prisons preparing women for release by addressing their health and skills needs. It proposes to establish 'strategic prison hubs, located...close to major centres of population... [which could] provide an appropriate physical environment to support women's caring responsibilities through family visits' (NOMS 2013: 3). However, the review goes on to suggest that, unlike Cortson's recommendation to replace the female estate with small custodial units, the current policy continues to rely on existing women's prisons as these can 'provide a wide range of services, particularly in partnership with health, to those who have significant needs' (NOMS: 3).

Before considering in more depth the feminist critique of women's imprisonment, the next section turns to dominant, more gender-neutral sociologies of imprisonment. It is within this literature that the thesis's focus on the 'pains of imprisonment' is contextualised.

## **1.2 Pains and Emotions: The dominant critique of imprisonment**

Prisons have attracted vast – though selective – attention from sociologists and criminologists (see for example: Crewe 2009; 2012; Liebling and Maruna 2005; Bosworth 1999; Carlen 1983; Jacob 1977; Ward and Kassebaum 1966; Irwin and Cressey 1962; Sykes 1958; Clemmer 1940). Studies of imprisonment span ethnographic reviews of prisoner experiences and the effects of imprisonment (e.g. Liebling and Maruna 2005; Irwin and Owen 2005), to explorations of inmate identities and inmate culture (e.g. Jewkes 2012b; Rowe 2011; Crewe 2009; Carrabine and Bosworth 2001), to psychological evaluations of prisoners' criminal motives, behaviour and readiness to return to society (e.g. Jamieson and Grounds 2005). Prisons research has also involved quantitative studies comparing quality and conditions across different establishments (Liebling 2004), as well as research on offending and re-offending rates (Walmsley 2009). In view of the prison environment, which has been presented both as a microcosm of society (Sykes 1958) and as an extreme and "unnatural" social environment (Galo and Ruggiero 1991), the prison has been a fertile ground for the sociological imagination (e.g. Goffman 1961; Foucault 1979).

### ***The contribution of the 'pains of imprisonment' literature***

Sociological studies of the prison in the 1950s and 1960s had an investigative focus on the ways that prisoners *adapt* to the extreme environment of the prison. Influenced by Clemmer's (1940) concept of "prisonisation"<sup>10</sup>, many of these studies focused on prisoner culture and its relevance to understanding prisoner behaviour. One of the earliest and, arguably, seminal studies of prison life was conducted by Gresham Sykes (1958) on the maximum security prison for men in New Jersey. The study concluded that the experience of imprisonment can be explained in terms of five vital deprivations or "pains" that reflect the prison's direct effect on the prisoner. First, Sykes identified the *deprivation of liberty*, second the *deprivation of goods and services*, third the *deprivation of opportunities for the development of heterosexual relations*, fourth the *deprivation of autonomy* and self-control and finally the *deprivation of personal security* or exposure to danger (1958: 63-83).

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<sup>10</sup> Prisonisation is defined as the process of adaptation that the prisoner undertakes in order to adhere to the principles, rules and atmosphere of their prison culture and regime. This process alludes to changes in the individual's behaviour, lifestyle and even identity, to comply with their new prison environment (Clemmer 1940).

Explaining these pains, Sykes writes that ‘severe bodily suffering has long since disappeared as a significant aspect of the custodians’ regime’<sup>11</sup>, but emphasises that these modern ‘pains of imprisonment’ ‘can be just as painful as the physical maltreatment which they have replaced’ (1958: 64). Thus, this seminal study introduces the concept of prison “pains” as *emotionally harmful experiences* that resonate with experiences of corporeal pain. However, although all five pains described by Sykes have a significant physical element and affect the prisoner’s body as much as her mind (exposing the significant interaction between the two), this perspective overlooks the embodied constitution of selfhood. In this sense, *The Society of Captives* (Sykes 1958) introduces the prisoner as a disembodied actor, and demonstrates an understanding of prisoner selfhood that is primarily concerned with psychological (mental) factors (Haney 2005).

Arguably, these five ‘pains of imprisonment’ have influenced many (if not all) subsequent studies of men and women’s imprisonment (e.g. Rowe 2011; Crewe 2009; Liebling and Maruna 2005; Liebling 1994; Carlen 1983; Bosworth 1999). More recently, the ‘pains of imprisonment’ has been a concept used to encompass the effects of imprisonment, ‘to include the social, psychological, behavioural, and emotional impacts’ of experiences of imprisonment affecting prisoners during and after their incarceration (Liebling and Maruna 2005: 3). Moreover, much of the sociology of prison life claims to explore ‘the way in which the[se] deprivations and frustrations pose profound threats to the inmate’s personality or sense of self-worth’ (Sykes 1958: 64). However, although the sociology of the prison is concerned with aspects of self-meanings (Rowe 2011), self-image and self-identity (Bosworth 1999; Crewe 2009), the concept of the self that is adopted often overlooks Mead’s (1934) appreciation of the interaction between nature and culture in the constitution of the *mindful, social body* and identity. It is suggested in Chapter 3 that there is a significant link between body and self-identity, and body-image and self-esteem (Grosz 1994), which can point to new directions in the understanding of the effects of imprisonment.

The effects and ‘pains of imprisonment’ have often been observed through the various *coping strategies* prisoners employ to survive their imprisonment (see also Chapter 7). For instance, in one of the most renowned studies on prisoner resistance, Cohen and Taylor (1972) explore the ways in which long-term inmates psychologically endure imprisonment by avoiding complete institutionalisation and by maintaining a sense of self. Cohen and Taylor explore power relations within the prison, but also point to the significant

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<sup>11</sup> This is a point that Foucault also makes in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), but with a brief yet notable discussion of certain exceptions (1979: 15-16).

strategies that (male) prisoners employed in order to resist the prison's dominant structures. Working on the same theme, but from a different perspective, Goffman's (1961) analysis of 'total institutions' in *Asylums* focuses on the institution's immense power to change the inmate through a process of institutionalisation, whereby the inmate's outside identity is stripped and replaced by a new, inmate-identity. Goffman's perspective focuses on the structures of the prison and its ability to transform offenders into compliant, docile, self-regulating prisoners.

### ***The call for an affective sociology of imprisonment***

Although the first studies of imprisonment to appear after the Second World War focused on exposing the prison's damaging and dangerous effects on its inmates and staff (e.g. Haney 1973; Barton 1966; Goffman 1963; Sykes 1958), over the last three decades, researchers have received little support to examine the effects of imprisonment (Liebling and Maruna 2005)<sup>12</sup>. This absence – or relative 'eclipse' - of sociological research in prisons (Wacquant 2002) produced limited (empirical) criticism of the functions of the prison and implicitly supported the political claim that, irrespective of the harms of imprisonment, inmates are resilient to them.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, this passive acceptance of the penal institution has failed to address adequately the full dimensions of penal harm<sup>14</sup>, failing to explain the long-term implications of pain, humiliation and injustice as part of the experience of imprisonment.

Having said this, it would be unfair to conclude that prisons research has entirely 'eclipsed'. Indeed, prisons researchers continue to expose how even modern, efficient, lenient and secure prisons, continue to cause harm and have few positive effects on their inmates, particularly when they are women (e.g. Einat 2005; Snacken 2005; Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2005). To borrow Gallo and Ruggiero's (1991) phrase, prisons have been declared 'factories for the manufacture of psycho-physical handicaps' (1991: 274).

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<sup>12</sup> For example, research access into prisons has significantly decreased. However, the pains of imprisonment have never stopped being a central topic in prisons research (Jewkes 2012b).

<sup>13</sup> This reflects the aforementioned punitive approach evidenced by shifts to a risk-management based policy and populist demands to act 'tough on crime'.

<sup>14</sup> This study agrees with Christie's (1986) observation that a prison sentence is the ultimate representation of punishment in that imprisonment is a process of 'pain delivery' in the form of punishment. This painful process arguably involves a series of harms. The concept of "harm" adopted in this thesis broadly adopts a social harms approach which includes physical, functional/economic, emotional and psychological harms as well as harms of cultural integrity (Hillyard and Tombs 2007: 17). Having said this, it was deemed beyond the scope of this thesis to engage with ongoing debates on the ontological reality and the definition of harm as found in the field of *zemiology*.

Liebling (1999) remarks that the issue lies not so much in an ‘eclipse’ in prisons research, but rather in that existing research appears to display little *affective influence* in publicising that prison pain constitutes serious harm.

Fear, anxiety, loneliness, trauma, depression, injustice, powerlessness, violence and uncertainty are all part of the experience of prison life. These hidden but everywhere apparent features of prison life have not been measured or taken seriously enough by those interested in the question of prison effects. Sociologists of prison life knew these things were significant, but have largely failed to convince others in a methodologically convincing way that such ‘pain’ constitutes a measurable ‘harm’. (Liebling and Maruna 2005: 3)

One way to address this problem would be to facilitate a new referential framework through which to research imprisonment and expose its debilitating effects. The thesis suggests that a methodological approach that takes into account the *embodied* elements of both experience and emotions can be an effective technique with which to demonstrate the severity of prison pain.

Following feminist and psychosocial approaches in criminology (e.g. Phillips and Earle 2010; Gelsthorpe 2007; Gelsthorpe and Morris 1990), the thesis conceptualises emotions as collectively experienced, communicated and constructed under pressure and in negotiation with one’s lived environment. This study sees emotions as sources of active subjectivity and agency (Ferrell et. al 2004) and more specifically argues that a phenomenology of emotions (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 138), which conceptualises emotions as active and embodied elements of lived experience, can offer a refined understanding of what incarceration feels like. For this reason, the communicative and inter-subjective nature of emotions is central to the pursuit of a methodologically fresh approach to the study of imprisonment. As Chapter 2 suggests, it is important to engage theoretically with the definitional origins and expression of emotions. In other words, as a challenge to existing penal practices, an *affective* sociology of imprisonment should attempt to elicit empathy to the pains of imprisonment by deconstructing the manifestation of emotions in the prison context. It is moreover suggested that in communicating what imprisonment *feels* like, this more emotionally-aware sociology, may also prove liberating for prisoners (and ex-prisoners) themselves. As Gallo and Ruggiero (1991) argue, the prison is a space of ‘de-communication’ where feelings of ‘disengagement’ result in a tapering communicative field where prisoners forget how to express themselves and often cannot communicate their suffering within a narrative that could be widely understood<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>An exploration of embodied emotions would elucidate our understanding of the prisoner, but, to paraphrase Giddens (1984), it would allow structure, and in this case prison structure, to be observed both through the medium and the product of the emotionally embodied practices it constitutes. The focus here lies on ‘the active,



As we have seen, the ‘pains of imprisonment’ are at the core of prisons research. And although the central focus of prisons research is the emotional, lived experience of the prison, the subject has not always been approached within an emotionally aware and reflexive perspective. This has been explained as part of an assumption that the purpose and the initial curiosity that leads to prisons research are irrelevant to the validity of the claims we make about prisons (Liebling 1999). This section has suggested that this tendency could change through an all-encompassing, more theoretically diverse approach towards emotions that considers them as embodied and socio-culturally specific. This would be an account that opens up research to a more subjective understanding of prisoners’ experiences.

### **1.3 The punishment-body relation: Feminist accounts of women’s imprisonment**

The aim of this section is to review gender-specific theories of imprisonment and to explain how these assist in understanding women’s custodial experience. I address three themes that have dominated this research: first, the *differential treatment* of women and the role of their minority status in shaping their treatment; second, their strategies for *coping, adaptation and resistance* to imprisonment; and finally, the relationship between *body and punishment* and the new direction this offers for future studies (Howe 1994).

#### ***Women’s differential and gendered treatment***

A key theme in the literature has been that of discrimination, found in the ways in which women are treated differently from men while in prison. Researchers have pointed to the paradox of women prisoners being treated differently from men, while also being treated as if they were men (i.e. by being imprisoned in regimes specific to men). Carlen’s influential study, *Women’s Imprisonment: A Study in Social Control* (1983) focuses on the social meaning of imprisonment and discusses the profile of women prisoners. Although it dedicates only one chapter to the actual prison under investigation (Cornton Vale), this chapter explores the unfavourable treatment of women in prison that results from their minority status within the criminal justice system (CJS), as well as from broader social

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emotionally expressive body as the basis of self, sociality, meaning and order’ (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 138) as it is constituted in everyday life, in ritualised interactions and in the broader socio-cultural realm. This proposed approach, where emotionally embodied practices are at the core of sociological investigation in prisons, can also bridge a gap in understanding the sentiments of both policy and penal theory. For instance the motive and urge (not just the justifications) to punish (Garland 2001) can be understood through a sociology of emotions in the prison context. Arguably, if we translate the emotionally embodied context of everyday life in prison then we could also understand the emotional make-up of the prison as an institution of punishment and as a socio-cultural and political practice (see also Scarry 1985).

constructions of women's social roles and their gendered treatment. Although the study was conducted thirty years ago, its conclusions are still relevant to women's imprisonment today, not least because women still make up only a small proportion of the total prison population. Carlen argues that this fact alone often causes women to be neglected and their particular needs to be inadequately addressed. Furthermore, Carlen corrects the popular misconception that the small population of women prisoners reflects a profile of dangerous and prolific offenders. She points out that the small size of the female estate means that many women are imprisoned far from their homes and families and that the consequences of this continue after their release, when access to appropriate facilities is limited and geographically spread (see also Gelsthorpe et al. 2007). In terms of the prison regimes for women, Carlen comments that opportunities for training and education are more limited than those available to men. She also argues that prisons for women are structured in the same way as prisons for men regardless of the fact that women's needs are different to those of men. She explains that women have particular physical and medical needs, different family responsibilities, and experience different cultural and social roles (Carlen 1983:76-77). Carlen's work illustrates that the differential treatment in response to women's minority status contribute to their painful experience of imprisonment.

Moreover, Carlen explains that the imprisonment of women involves different experiences of stigmatisation. Unlike male prisoners, who are stigmatised only as undesirable citizens, she argues that women prisoners are viewed as both non-citizens and as "unnatural" women (1983: 103). A woman's crime is interpreted not only as an act of law-breaking but also as a betrayal of her own gender role and femininity (1983: 13). She further explains that one of the reasons women in prison are seen as either mad or sad, and thus a main cause of their daily distress, is that they are treated as being 'both within and without sociability; both within and without femininity; and ... both within and without adulthood' (1983: 90). This means that while prison staff would condemn women's behaviour as childish, unfeminine and anti-social, these allegedly unwanted behaviours are also the result of the particular disciplining that women experience in prison. She concludes that while the aim in the imprisonment of men is to 'discipline and punish' the aim pursued with women prisoners is to 'discipline, medicalise, domesticise, psychiatrise, and infantilise' (1983: 90).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The focus on the gendered discipline of women in prison was scrutinised in later studies as it was seen to focus more on the structures that socially control women rather than on the technologies of women's punishment (Howe 1994).

The specific medical treatment of women, and particularly the impact of penal and medical policy on female drug users in prisons, is addressed by Sim (1990: 129-176) and Carlen (1998: 116-123). The introduction of Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) in the 1990s is considered a particularly pervasive practice on women and Carlen (1998) points to the significance of bodily integrity that emerges from these practices in prison:

The women themselves expressed concern ... about the violation of the social convention that dictates that women should usually take pains to hide their sexual parts ... but when a woman is forced to expose her body (in a strip search), to engage in supervised urinating (in the MDT test), or to live in constant fear that she will be involuntarily exposed to the surveillance of a prison officer( male or female) who may or may not look upon her with the gaze of a voyeur - but who will certainly look upon her with a legitimated punitive stare - it is arguable that she, sensing a perversion of both legitimate punishment and legitimate sex, will feel an intense humiliation. (Carlen 1998: 142)

Carlen exposes how daily life in prison contains additional punishments for women that are not specific to their offence, but to their gender. Not only are women physically confined and regulated, but their sense of privacy, dignity and bodily integrity are compromised under security regulations and pervasive treatments which use their bodies as the main sites of this degradation. Strip-searching and MDT have been considered to be particularly traumatising to women whose bodies are expected to be unexposed and who have also experienced disproportionately high levels of sexual and other abuse (Carlen 1998). This is also illustrated by research on women's health in prison, which indicates that although women enter prison with many physical and mental illnesses, their condition can deteriorate as a result of imprisonment (Plugge et al. 2006).<sup>17</sup> Although routine strip-searching officially ended after Baroness Corston described it as 'humiliating, degrading and undignified and a dreadful invasion of privacy' (Corston 2007:4), there are still examples of such violating practices, including a recent example given by the Chief Inspector of Prisons of a young girl who was 'held down and had her clothes forcibly removed from her' (HMCIP 2012:11).

Though some efforts to minimise personal intrusion have been made, these have not compromised the prison's focus on security and contraband regulation. More recently, body searches in prison have taken place through a scanning system moulded into a chair which is 'designed to detect small metallic objects, such a mobile phones and their component parts, or weapons, concealed within anal or vaginal cavities, the abdominal area and around the shins' (PSO 2010- 048). The chair called BOSS is described as not harmful to the individual and no more intrusive than metal detectors used in airports (PSO 2010- 048). Thus, the

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that the study by Plugge et al. (2006) also points to a number of health improvements experienced by some women in prison.

control of prisoners' bodies in secure environments is increasingly becoming more technologically advanced, arguably facilitating bodily intrusions that serve the priorities of prison disciplinary control and security.

### ***Experiencing imprisonment: Women's adaptation and resistance***

One of the first sociological studies to recognise that the needs of women and men are different was Ward and Kassebaum's (1966) research in Frontera Prison in California. The aim of their study was to investigate whether women prisoners *adapt* to imprisonment similarly to men, and they concluded that, unlike with men, there was a link between women's homosexual relations in prison and the profound sense of loss they expressed in relation to their families and friends outside. This study does not focus on the varying prison structures that affect women but instead reiterates a stereotypical model of feminine psychology (reflective of the time the study was conducted) that assumes women's dependence and pursuit of family-like relations. Nevertheless, it could be claimed that early studies of women's imprisonment tended to focus on the process of prisonisation and the strategies women employ in order to cope with imprisonment. Another key feature of earlier research was its focus on women's *resistance* to the prison. For example, Davies' (1990) collection serves as an illustration of women's ability to survive the 'pains of imprisonment' by gaining a voice through writing and other creative endeavours. This resistance literature demonstrates that women oppose and resist even in the most controlling environments, posing threats to dominant structures and rules that oppress them (e.g. Denton 2001; Bosworth 1999; Worrall 1990; Carlen et al. 1985).

### ***Prisoner Autobiographies***

Drawing on autobiographical literature written by women who have experienced imprisonment adds an important layer to our understating of the embodied and identity-laden experiences of custody. For instance, in a series of essays written mostly by women prisoners, the collection by Solinger et. al (2010), illustrates in detail the unique experience of women in American prisons. These diverse accounts range in addressing a series of relevant aspects of imprisonment for women, including motherhood, healthcare, doing time and prisoner rights, intimacy, sexuality and gendered identity. Moreover, the collection develops a broader critique of the prison by reflecting on women's creative and intellectual means of resisting through faith, writing or art.

Autobiographic work can capture the details of imprisonment that often researchers spending limited time in prison can overlook. In addition, personal accounts of time in

prison can exemplify in a narrative manner the impact of imprisonment on women's self-perceptions and broader life trajectories from a more moving and thus affective perspective. For example, Audrey Peckham's biography (1985) locates her prison experience to her life prior to her incarceration, by starting her story from the events that led to her arrest, sentencing and conviction 'for indictment to murder'. She then goes on to provide a vivid description of the stressful environment and conditions that she and other inmates endured in the remand centre at Pucklechurch and later at Styal. She concludes her narrative with an account of her post-release experiences. These balance the visual, physical description of the prison space and the bodily needs and infringements experienced by prisoners, with the emotional and psychologically damaging effects these experiences had on her overall sense of self and social relations. From a similar perspective, Ruth Wyner (2003) writes about her experience of coping with the pains of imprisonment and provides a moving critique of English prisons, calling for prison reform. Such autobiographical accounts, encapsulate the emotionally damaging impact of not only prison space, but also the sentencing process and the symbolic meaning of a custodial sentence, highlighting how prison practices are interpreted and internalised by prisoners. The example below illustrates how daily bodily deprivation in prison can be internalised by prisoners to symbolically represent the disparaging status of the inmate.

I was doing a little yoga on the cold cell floor when they came for me at 9 a.m. The discipline of it was bringing me back to myself a little and I felt annoyed at the interruption. But my life was no longer my own. As I was taken out of the cell I saw a washbasin and asked to use it. They let me splash my face and hands. Though I had brought some clean clothes, I was not allowed to change into them. It seemed as if they were trying to turn me into something dirty (Wyner 2003: 16).

The powerful critiques that such personal accounts can provide are particularly relevant to a phenomenological understanding of lived experience in and after prison.

However, though personal accounts of the prison are valuable resources for prison researchers, it is also important to keep in mind that several prisoner autobiographies that have received considerable media attention (see e.g. Vicky Pryce 2013) are often written by women derived from a middle class background. This means their prison experiences constitute an unpredictable event in their overall lives, and therefore capture only a small glimpse of the meanings incarceration has for the lives of those who have perpetually experienced deprivation and abuse. In other words, these are often not representative of the women who are most likely to be imprisoned, missing out many of the unintended pains of imprisonment caused due to the profiles of deprivation and exclusion that reflect the background of most women prisoners.

But prisoner autobiographies can nevertheless play a significant role in both applying a feminist criminology as well as challenging some of the assumptions of mainstream criminology. As Pat Carlen (1985) argues in her edited collection of four women's autobiographical accounts of criminalisation and imprisonment, such narratives can

[...] demonstrate in fine detail how, under certain material and ideological conditions, either law-breaking and/or other forms of deviant protest may indeed comprise rational and coherent responses to women's awareness of the social disabilities imposed upon them by discriminatory and exploitative class and gender relations.... [T]he complexity of the[se] accounts should call into question all of the monosexual and global theories of crime (Carlen et al. 1985: 9).

Thus, though autobiographical accounts cannot be seen as criminological texts in the sense that they do not adhere to institutionalised and accepted social research methods, they are nevertheless 'documents of direct and critical understanding of the discourse and social practices of prison' which arguably should inform the methodologies of criminological research on prisons (Morgan 1999: 337-338). This is particularly important because many such narratives provide a public voice to stories that have traditionally been hidden from public view and allow a subjective and critical insight into prisons in a way that can challenge official discourse.

#### *Empirical Research on Women's Coping and Resistance in Prisons*

From a theoretically profound perspective, Bosworth (1999) considers the effects of femininity on women prisoners from a feminist theoretical perspective. This notable contribution to the study of women's imprisonment introduces the popular notion of "identity" from a framework that has elaborately considered the notion of subjectivity, agency and resistance (1999: 97). Through this perspective, Bosworth (1999: 3) illustrates how power relations in prison are constantly negotiated 'on the level of identity'. In her consideration of and focus on the making and management of identity, she touches upon theoretical ideas about the embodiment of gender, race, sexuality and class and shows through some empirical examples, how power relations in prison are managed at the level of bodily interactions and presentation.

Bosworth (1999) argues that instead of allowing themselves to be oppressed by dominant discourses of femininity (i.e. as Carlen 1983 has argued), prisoners resist oppression through these very notions of femininity, showing how power relations in prison are negotiated and actively constituted by the inmates (Bosworth 1999: 4). Resistance is illustrated through prisoners' attempts to defy institutionalisation and in the coping strategies that help them to maintain a sense of self-identity, independent of the regulatory regime of

the total institution (Bosworth and Carrabine 2001). This is apparent, for example, in many women's efforts to perform parenting roles from prison by regularly contacting their children and managing their upbringing. Similarly to acts of protest outside prison, resistance in prison is not always apparent, and it is not always directly observed by the authorities (as the aim is not always to challenge authority). The definition of resistance, then, includes methods that prisoners develop to make life in prison more pleasurable, comfortable and identifiable to outside notions of self-presentation (Bosworth and Carrabine 2001). This implies that taking prisoners' reactions and acts of resistance (both subtle and explicit) into account would require us to re-evaluate important concepts as they become prison-specific (Smith 2002). For example, prisoners' attempts to regain a sense of self-control in prison can lead to acts of resistance that often entail acting *towards* and *against* their own bodies (i.e. Liebling 1994; Smith 2000; 2002; Chapters 5-7). As Bosworth (1999) suggests in her conclusion, in order to understand the nature and implications of penal power, we should seek a new 'criminological imagination' which can appreciate the importance of the politics of identity and subjectivity to the delivery and experience of punishment.

Taking a similar interest in the making of self in prison, Mary Eaton's (1993) research on the experiences of women prisoners went beyond the pains of imprisonment as felt and lived inside prison, and evaluated the long-term impact of incarceration on women suggesting the detrimental effects a prison sentence can have post-release. She explores the prison and resettlement experiences of 34 women and discusses the 'enabling conditions conducive to women taking charge of their lives and changing them' (Eaton 1993: 99)<sup>18</sup>. This study further highlights the parallel formal and informal controls former female prisoners are subject to and concludes that women employ four main strategies to deal with their gendered discipline and punishment. First, is a strategy of *withdrawal*, a process whereby, in an attempt to avoid further discipline and a stripping of identity, women isolate themselves in prison and suppress their sense of self until after release. A second strategy is *retaliation*. This may involve both violent as well as more passive forms of resistance to the prison authorities. As Eaton comments, both of these strategies can have 'the potential to endanger the self' (Eaton: 18). A third strategy is that of *incorporation*, whereby prisoners will engage and endorse inmate cultures and hierarchies and to some extent reinforce the

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that Eaton's sampling is different from the approach undertaken in the present study in that her research participants were interviewed at varying stages after their release from prison. No distinction is made between the participants' responses in relation to these temporal differences.

effects of the regime. The fourth strategy identified by Eaton is *self-mutilation*. 'Here the prisoner takes control of her body and inflicts on herself more pain than the regime may inflict' (Eaton: 18). Ironically, argues Eaton, this last strategy is self-defeatist as it can render a woman prisoner subject to additional medical and disciplinary control (Eaton: 18).

Discussing women's sense of self in prison, Mary Eaton suggests that identity is adapted to the prison environment, which means that upon release women take out of prison a sense of self that has been cultivated inside. This has serious consequences for the women's chances of reintegration and active engagement with their renewed social environment. It is coupled with the intense stigmatisation ex-prisoners experience, often inviting them to construct identities and lead post-release lives founded on secrecy and surveillance (Eaton: 19). Mary Eaton concludes that resettlement organizations were crucial in providing her research participants with the 'space in which to grow out of the prison self' (Eaton: 19). She summarises women ex-prisoner's progression into change by analysing three processes that are necessary for successful resettlement. First, *re-direction*, whereby the woman becomes aware of the changes she needs to make in her life. Second, *recognition*, whereby women's efforts are recognized by others, helping them to 'think differently of themselves' (Eaton: 20). The third ingredient identified as necessary for a process of change is the development of *reciprocal relationships* that are based on equality and which, Eaton suggests, will help foster an autonomous self-identity post-release.

### ***An evaluation of the feminist contribution to the study of women's imprisonment***

At this stage it is worth recapping the areas in which feminist criminology has expanded our understanding of women's imprisonment. Feminist studies of women's imprisonment have approached the subject in different ways but all maintain that imprisonment is a debilitating experience that is inappropriate for most women offenders. It is evident from the "profile" of women prisoners (see Introduction) that most of them serve only short sentences which severely disrupt their lives and have little deterrent effect. These women emerge from the lowest socio-economic ranks of society, with significant mental and physical health problems and histories of unemployment, drug addiction and sexual or physical abuse. Moreover, women's criminality differs from that of men, in that women's crimes are the crimes of a particularly powerless and vulnerable group (Chesney-Lind 2000). Fewer women offenders are employed and a larger proportion are derived from "non-manual classes" (Carlen 1998). The majority of prisoners are in need of accommodation, education, rehabilitation and health-care before and after their imprisonment. It is known that many women enter prison hoping to have their "needs" addressed, often for the first time, and



although they may be offered opportunities for drug detoxification, their needs are more often than not compromised to accommodate the prison's security functions and cost limitations (Hannah-Moffat 2001; 2010; Smith 2002). From this we can conclude that imprisonment, along with its attached disciplines, deprivations, punishments and stigma, can only exacerbate women's debilitating circumstances, causing long-term harms to their self-identities, bodies and lifestyles. This is certainly confirmed by research into the experience of women's imprisonment. This, by now, vast literature suggests that women are disciplined and corrected within prisons with the aim of changing them into "normal women". To this end, women are not only experiencing imprisonment for their crimes but also for deviating against the accepted norms of their gender roles (Carlen 1983).

But feminist literature has also shown that women are active agents, constantly negotiating their position and conditions of punishment and engaging in acts of resistance that often reflect their sense of identity and subjectivity (Bosworth 1999). Women's self-meanings are imported and adjusted to the prison's culture (Kruttschnitt et al. 2000), they are negotiated between inmates and staff (Rowe 2011), and they impact daily on mundane activities in prison (e.g. Smith 2000; 2002; 2009; Wahidin and Tate 2005). In addition, women have been shown to internalise the 'pains of imprisonment' more noticeably than men, including the practice of self-injury and coping strategies that make their bodies central to life in prison and to their strategies of resistance (Smith 2002; Bosworth 1999; Liebling 1994).

Regardless of perspective, it is worth noting here that researchers on the imprisonment of women are significantly influenced by the works of Foucault (1979), Goffman (1961) and classic studies on the experience of imprisonment (e.g. Cohen and Taylor 1972; Sykes 1958). Feminist criminological approaches to imprisonment have used these studies, but have moved beyond them to address the social control and oppression of women from a gender-focused perspective that connects with and gains insight from other instances of women's oppression (Heidensohn and Silvestri 2012; Bosworth 2004).

The contributions of feminists in this field are numerous, not only in criminological theory, but also in social policy. As Snider (2003: 356) explains, feminists contributed 'to the constitution of a self-aware, robust female offender, equipped with the language and concepts of resistance, on an individual (if not collective) level'. Feminists fought within the 'equality discourse' and managed, as Heidensohn (1994) argues, to show that the woman offender is no longer just a powerless victim. Overall, feminist research focused on penal

policy and campaigned for a better treatment of women in courts and in prison (e.g. Carlen et al. 1985; Seear and Player 1986; Cook and Davis 1999). These efforts, however, were met with further challenges. Feminist voices are often ‘heard [by policy makers] in ways that authorise expanded surveillance, repression and control’ (Snider: 369). For instance, the growing number of women prisoners across many jurisdictions has been explained by feminist criminologists as a misleading manipulation of gender and race equality campaigns (Hayman 2006). The criminal justice system’s emphasis on equality resulted in the treatment of women ‘as though they were men, particularly when the outcome is punitive, in the name of equal justice’ (Chesney-Lind 2006:18). This tendency is described by Chesney-Lind (2006) as ‘vengeful equity’. The construction of women and girls’ criminality as observed through the media is an example of this growing inclination to present women’s criminality in terms specific to men’s criminal behaviour, inviting criminal justice responses that are often blind to women’s differential needs and backgrounds.

Thus, in the twenty-first century, the role of feminist criminology continues to be seminal. Chesney-Lind (2006: 21) has suggested that feminist criminology’s research and activism on intersectional instances of oppression (i.e. occurring on a gendered, racial and classed level) give it a challenging yet central responsibility to respond critically and struggle against an era of political backlash. Arguably post-modern perspectives in feminist criminology contribute a fertile theoretical field from which women’s multiple oppressions can be better understood.

### ***Post-modern feminist approaches to women’s imprisonment***

It could be argued that theoretical understandings of the punishment of the female prisoner’s body in prison have remained mostly absent from prison studies where the impact of imprisonment has focused more on the discipline of prisoners and not the punishment *and* discipline of embodied agents. Although Foucault’s influence may account for a disembodied spotlight on the ‘prisoner’s soul’<sup>19</sup> (Foucault 1979), his work still considers the making of power relations through the lens of disciplining institutions (like the ‘carceral’ and the clinic) which aim to regulate the body. The body in Foucault’s view is a ‘discursive’ creation of power/knowledge influencing political investment. He argues that in the eighteenth century, the punishment imposed on offenders shifted from a torture of the body (inflicting physical pain on the body and public shaming) to a punishment of the soul, which

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault could be and has been interpreted to imply a move towards the mere punishment of ‘souls’ or disembodied minds. However, in *Discipline and Punish* itself and in his later works and interviews (i.e. 1979; 1981a; 1981b; 1982; 1983), Foucault makes clear that the body does not cease to be the focus of modern punishment and discipline.

aims to watch closely the body behind the walls of the modern prison. As evidence, Foucault uses the example of Bentham's panopticon, an architectural model of the prison which enabled constant observation of the inmates. Through this architectural arrangement and through the timetabled organisation of daily activity, the modern body became subject to a series of technologies associated with monitoring, controlling and inflicting power through a constant 'disembodied gaze' (Foucault 1979: 78).

In this process, the body undergoes "normalisation", becoming what the forces of governmentality instigate. This normalisation, Foucault explains, is not directly inflicted: the embodied social actor normalises her own bodily behaviour through the exercise of self-regulation (which requires an awareness of the self as embodied object). The effect of this is 'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (1979: 28); thereby every prisoner eventually becomes her own jailer (Bartky 1990: 21). In his analysis, Foucault thus draws the parallel between prison and society, prisoner and free citizen. He argues that it is in this process of self-policing that we can trace the genesis of 'individualism', extreme self-consciousness and isolationism, which are all hallmarks of our (late) modern context (Foucault 1979; Giddens 1991). To better demonstrate his analysis of ideological and structural shifts in modern, liberal societies, Foucault portrays the connections he sees between various modern institutions and highlights the permeability of prison space and the complex union between modern technologies of discipline and practices of punishment both within and outside penal and legal structures.

In one of the most sophisticated analyses of punishment, Howe (1994) invites feminists to revisit Foucault's contribution not only on disciplinary technologies but also on penality. She urges researchers of punishment to undertake a critically Foucauldian perspective in analysing women's imprisonment in ways that can explore the complex relation between punishment and body. Howe explains that while feminist theory has focused on the technologies of women's discipline in society, it has neglected the question of 'penality' and punishment. As she explains:

[...] precisely the punishment-body relation has been overlooked in feminist appropriations of Foucault. These have been preoccupied with disciplined rather than punished bodies ... What has not yet been attempted is a feminist appropriation of Foucault's ideas about penality as opposed to discipline. (Howe 1994: 195)

In other words, Howe (1994) suggests that while feminist theory has engaged with this Foucauldian analysis, expanding it into theories of the sexed female body and the self-disciplining female body (e.g. Bordo 2001; Bartky 1990; see Chapter 3), it has remained

focused on the discipline of bodies outside prison, disregarding the specifics of women's punishment. As a result, the theoretical understanding of punishment has remained tied to a mostly masculinist, disembodied research agenda (Howe 1994:3).

Although the limitations of this approach have already been challenged by researchers of women prisoners who have denounced punishment as gendered discipline (e.g. Carlen 1983; 1998) and considered its implications as gendered resistance (e.g. Bosworth 1999), these contributions, do not focus on the centrality of the body in constituting and experiencing punishment. Such a consideration of the punishment of the body *as object* of discipline, control and inscribed pain is an essential step towards the advancement of a feminist critique of penalty (Howe 1994). More than that, I argue that an understanding of the experience of such punishment as reflected through the prisoner's body *as subject* (that is, an active, affective and reflexive agent) is also indispensable for a comprehensive account of both the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes 1958) and the emotional harms that these entail (Liebling and Maruna 2005). Howe explains:

Punishment *per se*, has remained imprisoned within a masculinist theoretical stronghold. This has resulted in a radical disjunction between two critical theoretical projects: the masculinist one of analysing the emergence of punishment regimes in the context of the state's power to punish and the feminist one of mapping the differential impact of disciplinary power on lived female bodies. (Howe 1994: 2-3)

The disjunction that Howe observes between the feminist theories of the body and the more mainstream theories of punishment, pinpoints the subject of this thesis. I argue that this gap in the literature, or relative lack of communication between feminist theory and the sociology of punishment and imprisonment, has resulted in a skewed understanding of women's prison experiences, and particularly their embodied experience of punishment. By addressing the punishment-body relation, not only will new understandings emerge about the experience of imprisonment, but it will also become possible to explore the social control and punishment of women's bodies in and out of prison in the current consumer-orientated, late-modern context.

Garland (2006:419) suggests that the study of punishment needs to incorporate a more 'multi-dimensional' account that considers the relevance of 'cultural sensibilities' to the infliction and arguably experience of punishment. Such an account would go beyond the notion that punishment is an act of power relations (i.e. the state's authority and power to captivate) and would incorporate the role of emotions and motives in the practice of

punishment.<sup>20</sup> As Howe (1994) highlights, ‘studies of women offenders as well as women victims who undergo western criminal justice processes indicate that it is precisely the non-legal forms of punishment – the ‘implicit penalties’ – which punish women more’ (1994: 117). Therefore, a perspective that can understand the interconnection between embodied identity and socio-cultural structures can explain why we punish the way we do and how these technologies of punishment are experienced and linked to the broader structures of the social control of women. In other words, a methodological exploration of the use of the prisoner’s body as a *reflexive tool* for the delivery of punishment and for the embodied experience of prison is essential to understand the non-legal and more indirect forms of punishment imposed upon women. Undertaking this exploration could also critique the (discursive) justifications of punishment. As Howe argues, this focus on the body-punishment relation could reveal a new understanding and a more complete critique of punishment overall.

Finally, expanding on a point also raised by others (see Hannah-Moffat 2001; Hayman 2006), Howe warns that prison reform is largely about perfecting the institution of the prison rather than challenging its legitimacy:

From the beginning the prison was caught up in reform programmes, whose purpose was apparently to correct it, but which seem to form part of its functioning. Thus, the prison should not be seen as an ‘inert institution’. Rather, ‘the prison has always formed part of an active field in which projects, improvements, experiments, theoretical statements, personal evidence and investigation have proliferated’. (Howe 1994: 36, quoting Foucault 1979: 235)

She continues this point by referring to what Foucault describes as the social function of the prison. He argues that the prison is not merely an institution, but rather an ‘unceasing discipline’ (Foucault 1979: 236) and, therefore, it should not be analysed as a structure that is solely concerned with offenders but with a wider subject-matter; what Foucault calls ‘the delinquent’ (1979: 266). According to Foucault, prison is concerned with the production of delinquents, which is why it is not focused on the physical torture of bodies, but on the identity and subjectivity of the delinquent body and its effective management (1979: 254-5). The production of this ‘delinquent individual’ becomes possible by the persistent transformation of her body into a docile, self-regulating, stigmatised body which bears the signs of incarceration and criminality and whose effects go beyond the walls of the prison and the time a prisoner spent in prison (e.g. Moran 2012). This transformation holds

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<sup>20</sup> This is because punishment can be said to physically and symbolically set citizens apart from the category of ‘delinquents’ it creates. Punishment provides those outside the prison walls with the opportunity to actualise their identities in relation to those inside the prison (see also Bauman 1991 on categorisation as a process of ambivalence). Moreover, punishment can be said to capture our voyeuristic satisfaction as it legitimises our desire to see those who are not us experience pain (see Garland 1990).

important implications for the relation between gender and body and the relation between punishment and the embodied self in a liminal spatio-temporal context (see Chapter 5).

#### **1.4 Imprisoned Bodies: Towards a feminist critique of embodied punishment**

Although sociologists of imprisonment have generally approached the prison experience from a disembodied, Cartesian perspective,<sup>21</sup> aspects of bodily discipline in prisons have been considered at least in part. For example, studies of imprisonment have focused on women's health (Plugge et al. 2006; Plugge and Fitzpatrick 2005), the symbolic power of eating for prisoners (Ugelvik 2011; Godderis, 2006a; 2006b), tattooing and exercise (Sabo et al. 2001; DeMello, 1993) and the punitive nature of dress in prison (Ash 2010). Imprisoned bodies have also been considered in studies into aspects of identity such as ageing (Wahidin and Tate 2005), menstruating (Smith 2009), performing femininity (Bosworth 1999; Moran 2013a) and managing techniques of stigma concealment (e.g. Moran 2012; 2013a). Finally, as already discussed, Carlen (1983; 1998) and Sim (1990) have continuously criticised prisons' medicalised and degrading focus on women's bodies as expressed through gendered educational programmes, strip searches, MDT and drug-based treatments.

Frigon (2007) has, in fact, called for a 'criminology of the body' which can consider the implications of 'political techniques directed to the body' (2007:329). As she accurately observes, the prisoner's body is still the focus of the prison's disciplinary treatment and, following a Foucauldian perspective, she argues that the construction of the deviant body lies in binary social categories of exclusion which assume that there is such a thing as a "normal" body. To expose the double nature of the imprisoned body as both controlled and resistant, Frigon argues that bodies in prison are constructed as both *dangerous* and *in danger* (2007: 245). This is a helpful observation which this thesis considers through a phenomenological evaluation of how the prisoner lives her imprisonment *through* and often *against* her own body. However, Frigon's perspective on the imprisoned body focuses only on the ways that the body is "marked" in prison, either through processes of humiliation and mortification, or through sickness and victimisation (2007: 245). In doing this, she considers how the body is disciplined in prison and not necessarily how it is punished. In other words,

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<sup>21</sup> As Mary Bosworth (1999: 98) also observes, 'criminological investigations of the prison remain highly influenced by the traditions of Western epistemology which have conceived of the subject as disembodied and rational. Thus, Cartesian dualities can be found in the tendency of criminologists to conceptualise prisons in a series of polar opposites as well as in the research methods which pursued strategies of objectivity and measurement'.

this perspective does not facilitate insight into the lived experience of feelings and the expression (and repression) of emotional pain in the prison context. Nonetheless, her empirical work (with Canadian prisoners) still acknowledges the relevance of the body in the constitution of the prisoner.

Another remarkable contribution to the embodied experiences of imprisonment is made by Leder (2004) who, as a phenomenologist, considers the experiences of a group of male prisoners in the US. Through a perspective that accounts for the role of their bodies in living and constituting the prison space and the passage of time in prison, Leder highlights the interaction between bodies and “doing time”. Although theoretically profound, this research neglects the gendered aspects of men’s embodied experiences and does not consider the *painful* aspects of prisoner experiences, thus overlooking the emotional experience of imprisonment. In *Absent Bodies*, an earlier work, Leder (1990) develops an influential phenomenological theory of the body in pain (see Chapter 2), which in his work with prisoners (Leder 2004), he curiously neglects, thus disregarding the emotional and physical experience of pain in prison.

Leaving the North American research context, consideration of the punishment-body relation in the context of women’s imprisonment in the UK can be found in the work of Wahidin (2002) (see also Wahidin and Tate 2005). Wahidin (2002) focuses her research on the experience of imprisonment as reflected through ageing prisoners’ bodies, working mainly with a growing minority of older women prisoners. The aim of her work is to consider how ‘old female bodies are performed under the prison gaze’ (2002: 177), and in so doing, she investigates the making of older embodied identities in prison. The damaging impact of imprisonment is explored through the concept of time and women’s agency in “doing time”, as well as dealing with bodily changes that emerge from long periods of time spent inside prison. Hence, although there have been some recent but scarce accounts of embodied experiences in prison, a precise focus on the interaction between prison pains and their embodied experiences has remained largely unexplored.

We still do not know what it *feels* like to be a prisoner (male or female), and consequently we know relatively little about the embodied pains of imprisonment. Along with this, we do not know how the prisoner becomes aware of her embodiment and makes sense of it inside prison. Moreover, we still do not know how the ‘pains of imprisonment’ are lived *through* and *from* the prisoner’s body. Although the body as object is the prison’s target in terms of discipline and punishment, we have yet to appreciate the role of the body

in living, experiencing and coping with the harmful nature of the prison. Finally, we do not know how prison can *change* bodies and embodied selves in ways that can be interpreted and felt by prisoners as positive and enhancing. Not knowing what the precise, negative and positive, bodily impact of imprisonment is, means that we still do not know how emotions in prison are constructed, managed and expressed.

It is important to note here that although many other studies have intentionally or unintentionally pursued an understanding of prisoner experiences with a view to drawing a general “profile” of women prisoners, thus theorising the experience for *all* women, the framework that this thesis is proposing challenges the need and the possibility to do this.<sup>22</sup> The phenomenological account of embodied experiences of the prison aims to deconstruct the various subjective reflections of women’s narratives in ways that demonstrate the embodied ‘pains of imprisonment’ in diverse and often conflicting representations that highlight women’s intersectional oppression. As the nature of lived experience is multi-faceted and inter-corporeal, derived both from internal and external influences, it is possible to appreciate *affectively* these lived experiences only through a narrative-based approach (Katz 2002) of subjective tales of imprisonment (see Chapter 4).

The focus on gender in this thesis derives from feminist theories which highlight the gendered organisation of social life and its significance to social action and interaction (Bartky 1990; Young 2005; Butler 1992). Such feminist theory has demonstrated the relevance of gender to the political understanding of social structures and lived experiences, by engaging elaborately with the function and representation of the body in time and space (see Chapters 2 and 3). Arguably, a more theoretically immersed feminist criminology should, therefore, return to the basic manifestation of gender: to bodies and their lived experience (Moi 1999; see Chapter 3). In doing this, it could consider how such gendered bodies constitute social conduct and are implicated in their own oppression in a situationally-specific manner. This evaluation of lived bodies under the penal gaze would allow feminist criminology to critique the persistent idea that women are “ruled by their biology”, a notion that permeates policy, legal, media and medical discourses that form both perceptions and practices of crime control and punishment. An embodiment paradigm within feminist criminology could challenge the notion of the “pathological” or “deviant” woman by defying the dualisms of culture/nature, bodies/minds, rational/emotional. One of the goals

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<sup>22</sup> Having said this, feminists such as Spivak and Rooney (1994) argue that conceptual, all-inclusive categories such as “woman” may be necessary as a form of ‘strategic essentialism’ in order to manage a feminist project in pragmatic terms (for a critique see Butler 1992).



and contributions of feminist criminology is to expose the interaction of formal and informal mechanisms of the social control that collectively construct “normal” female behaviour. To contribute to these analyses, it is suggested that the management of female bodies within spaces of both informal and formal control, along with their reaction and subjective representation within the prison, is an essential step for a more nuanced understanding of the nature of the oppression that such penal controls constitute.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have suggested first that embodiment and lived experience as theoretical and methodological frameworks can address the recent call for an adequately “emotional” understanding of the prison experience (Jewkes 2012a; Liebling 1999). Second, I have suggested that adopting such an approach would also allow researchers to articulate affectively those ‘pains of imprisonment’ that have remained absent from our knowledge of the prison. The sociology of imprisonment has explained the effects of imprisonment as a compilation of psychological, emotional and socio-cultural reactions to the custodial experience. I have argued that, if we look more deeply within these, at the prisoner’s embodied experience and at the bodily expressive nature of emotions, we may be able to articulate what punishment feels like and, thus, explain how imprisonment can impose a serious and lasting harm.

A central argument that will be developed in the following chapters is that the phenomenological approach found in theories of embodiment can help researchers of the prison to better understand the implications of control, regulation, structures and institutionalisation on the prisoner’s identity, specifically on the female prisoner’s corporeal self. Simultaneously, Foucault’s historical approach to the study of bodies is also vital and, as I argue, researchers should re-evaluate their interpretation of Foucault’s analysis of punishment, reconsidering their tendency to separate the punishment of the body and the punishment of the mind with the birth of the prison. By adopting a critical understating of the Foucauldian relationship between punishment and body (e.g. Howe 1994), we will be better able to contextualise the meanings of contemporary imprisonment and punishment. In this chapter I have suggested that a dialogue between feminist theory and more “masculinist” accounts of imprisonment will allow for a more nuanced understanding of lived experience in prison and that this can contribute towards a more emotionally aware study of the gendered ‘pains of imprisonment’. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, this criminological dialogue would be most fruitful if it interacted with sociological accounts of embodiment and emotions. Such an intra-disciplinary conversation would widen the breadth

as well as depth of theoretical accounts in the field of prisons research and would provide a needed, feminist, critique of punishment.

## Chapter 2

### Theorising the body: Drawing a perspective from the sociology of embodiment and emotions

The body is ...crucial to both the micro and the macro orders of society. The body is the vehicle of self-performances and the target through rituals of degradation of social exclusion. Intimacies and exclusions focus on the body as the means of indicating the self. A sociology of the body would thus also have to embrace a sociology of deviance and control, since mortifications of the self are inextricably bound up with the mortifications of the body [...] The sociology of the body as vehicle of information about the self would thus divide around the stigmatology of the outer surface and a teratology of deformed structures. (Turner 1984 [2008]: 41-2)

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis and suggests that engagement with the *embodiment paradigm* could offer a more theoretically grounded understanding of the experience of imprisonment. A primary aim of this chapter is to exemplify how embodiment can act as an important methodological and analytical tool for the sociological study of prisons generally and women prisoners in particular. A paradigm of embodiment captures the interests of a number of disciplines (e.g. anthropology, sociology and psychoanalysis) that can supplement research methods, both theoretical and empirical, on women prisoners. This chapter focuses on an analysis of how the body has been conceptualised mainly in sociological theory. This sociological analysis is supplemented in Chapter 3 with a discussion of feminist perspectives on the body and an evaluation of how sociological and feminist theories on the body can advance the study of women in prison. Both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 focus on those theoretical perspectives that are most relevant to the study of women's imprisonment<sup>23</sup>. Both chapters highlight that attention to women's embodied experience of imprisonment is important because the impact of imprisonment directly affects women's bodies and body-image (e.g. as seen with the prevalence of self-injury practices in women's prisons). In addition, the chapters suggest that understanding the woman prisoner's embodied sense of self is particularly necessary because gendered values imposed on women often condition their sense of self so that it is more bodily-conscious than that of their male counterparts (Grosz 1994; Bordo 2003; Young 2005).

Broadly speaking, the body in social theory has been examined either as society's medium of inscription on the self (Mauss 1934 [1973; Turner 2008) or as a source of knowledge and basis of lived experience (Heidegger 1962; Leder 1990). This thesis works within both of these approaches because in its attempt to evaluate the impact of imprisonment on women, as well as the lived experience of imprisonment, it is interested in

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<sup>23</sup> Chapters 2 and 3 offer an analysis of relevant sociological and feminist perspectives on embodiment, but they are not exhaustive reviews of the literature on the body and embodiment.

addressing both how prison and wider structures impact, inscribe and correct women's bodies; as well as how women use their bodies to construct, live and feel their imprisonment. Nevertheless, the phenomenological perspective, which focuses on the body as the basis of lived experience, is acknowledged in this thesis as more relevant for a study of prisoners' lived experiences. Specifically, the chapter proposes a more '*experientially grounded*' view of embodiment (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 8) in the context of imprisonment. An advantage of this approach is that it views embodiment as the foundation of our existence in the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962) and it overcomes existing dualities, while permitting a better understanding of the interaction between body, self, society and institutional structures. Moreover, the situational approach that a phenomenological account on embodiment adopts is important in drawing the diverse, complex and changing narratives that make up women's experience of prison (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). To achieve an adequate discussion of the body-self relation, sociologists have argued that dualisms that traditionally shape the social understanding of bodies ought to be overcome: for example, the mind/body, culture/nature, object/subject dichotomies have arguably limited the sociological potential of the body (Williams and Bendelow 1998). This thesis too, goes beyond these dualisms by offering a post-Cartesian account of female offenders' identities and lived experiences.

The chapter starts by contextualising the study of embodiment within the sociological discipline and then continues with an evaluation of the post-structuralist, interactionist and phenomenological perspective on bodies and embodiment. The second part of the chapter focuses on an analysis of the relationship between embodiment, emotions and pain and considers the practice of self-injury as a relevant example in understanding the embodied nature of emotions, as well as the profound interaction between bodies, emotions and lived experience.

## **2.1 The body as analytic device**

### ***The renaissance of the body in the sociological imagination***

Sociologists of the body explain that the body's resurgence in the sociological agenda begun after the 1980s and the sociology of embodiment today constitutes one of sociology's most expanding and diverse sub-disciplines (Fraser and Greco 2005). The sociological literature addresses the reasons for the revival of the body in our late modern context with reference to social changes that contributed to the making of a 'somatic society' (Turner 1984 [2008]: 5). This argues that contemporary society transformed into 'a society

within which our major political and moral problems are expressed through the conduct of the human body' (Turner 2008: 6). The first social change acknowledged in the literature is the transition of western society into a post-industrial economy, which developed possibilities for leisure. These possibilities are associated with the supposition that consumption can act as a form of self-expression (Turner 2008). The second social change, addressed by Giddens (1991: 12), refers to the 'transformation of intimacy' where the body has acquired the role of a vehicle in interpersonal interactions. Fraser and Greco (2005) and Howson (2004) identify an additional transformation; namely, the demographic change into ageing populations where chronic disease, instead of acute illness, contribute to changes in the function of therapeutic relations and blur the boundaries between conditions of health and illness (Fraser and Greco 2005: 2; Howson 2004: 4). Following from this, contemporary societies are faced with developments in medicine and technology which challenge the nature and limits of the human body and complicate conceptual categories such as age and gender in entirely new ways. Moreover, authors on the sociology of the body agree that the influence of social movements, particularly the feminist and disability movements, as well as black and gay civil rights movements, were crucial in this renaissance of the body, both in society and in its theorisation (Turner 2008; Shilling 2003; Fraser and Greco 2005). Therefore, the revival of sociological attention on bodies today, is very much a result of a growing, wider social concern and preoccupation with both the materiality and symbolic function of bodies.

Reflecting its diverse social impacts, the body has been sociologically understood in various ways. Osborne (1996) proposes that sociologists of the body should investigate 'the ways in which the *body is a problem*, and a problem in the positive sense – not just as an "obstacle", but as a *vehicle for thought and action*' (Osborne 1996: 192, emphasis added). In other words, a study of the body can be one where the body is investigated as an object of knowledge or a methodological lens through which to observe the workings of the social world. Similarly, Fraser and Greco (2005: 3) refer to different perspectives on the body as a "toolbox"<sup>24</sup>. In the same way, this thesis approaches different (and often quite disparate) perspectives on the body with a 'pragmatist' (Dewey 1922) intention. The body is used as a theoretical and methodological tool with which to re-visit the effects of imprisonment and, as a set of tools, different perspectives on the body direct us towards solutions to problems relating to the 'pains of imprisonment', prisoner identity and the punishment of women in prison.

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<sup>24</sup> Foucault himself advised his readers to view his work as a toolbox from which they could pick the tools most specific to their own uses without seeking a necessary order between them (Foucault 1974).

### ***Defining the sociological body***

The sociology of embodiment has argued that beyond their materiality, bodies are socially constructed (Crossley 2001; Featherstone et al. 1991; Shilling 1993 [2003]; Turner 2008; Foucault 1979), being among other things, sexed, gendered, and sexualised (Backett-Millburn and McKie 2001; Grosz and Probyn 1995; Laqueur 1992; Butler 1993). Bodies also play an important function in acting as representative symbols of self-identity while also demonstrating a significantly social nature. This is reflected both in bodies' abilities to communicate selfhood and in their capacity to demonstrate and share their social inscription. The impact of social pressures on bodies has been discussed through examples of how bodies are customised, fashioned, commodified and medicalised (O'Neill 1985; Bauman 1991; 2013; Featherstone 2000; Pitts 2003; Tseëlon 1995). The sociology of embodiment has also considered the notion that bodies are our main means of differentiation, often being objects of a classificatory system that relies on "Othering". In this context, bodies have been discussed as stigmatised and differentiated (Goffman 1963; 1968 Canguilhem 1998), and arguably, subject to the politics of gender practices (Bordo 2003; Weiss 2002) race and ethnicity (Mohanram 2004). In addition, bodies are also subjected to the pressures and disciplines of diet and exercise regimes (Moore 1997; Pronger 2002). Moreover, phenomenologists have argued that bodies feel, perceive and constitute our knowledge of the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Williams and Bendelow 1998; Murray 2007). However, there is also uncertainty over what constitutes the concept of the body and debate over whether bodies are relational notions, conceived only through the practices and processes that produce them (Howson 2004: 9). Despite this complexity, the sociology of embodiment makes clear that the "late-modern body", as both object and subject, is at the centre of the interaction between identity and social structures.

Under high modernity,<sup>25</sup> one's sense of self experiences constant changes as it engages in regular self-questioning that allows for revisions and corrections to one's life narrative. The self has attained *fluidity in narrative*, which implies that the role of the body in the making and re-making of self through reflexivity has attained a new, heightened importance. For example, medical and technological innovations have given the possibility

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<sup>25</sup>Defining high modernity, Giddens (1991) explains that this is a post-traditional age where modern values and tendencies have taken on a radical and universalised dimension. High modernity is engaging in a heightened degree of social reflexivity, allowing for new knowledge to enter existing institutions and actions, while at the same time, this social reflexivity is calling for a re-conceptualisation and re-ordering of social relations and the 'socialising of biological mechanisms' in terms that are 'internally referential' to high modernity (Giddens 1991: 7-8). As Beck (1992) argues, this means that modernity is constituted by its own theme. High modernity comprises a new fundamental attitude towards radical uncertainty and doubt by reflecting that all knowledge is questionable, it no longer constitutes fact, and is always under the scrutiny of revision and new hypothesising relevant to ever-changing circumstances (Giddens 1991: 194-6; Bauman 1991; 1992).

to certain individuals to actively engage in perfecting and changing their self-presentation and identities through bodily modification. According to Giddens (1991), the body:

[b]ecomes a site for interaction, appropriation and re-appropriation, linking reflexively organized processes and systematically ordered expert knowledge. Once thought to be the locus of soul, then the centre of dark perverse needs, the body has become fully available to be 'worked upon' by the influences of high modernity. As a result of these processes, its boundaries have been altered. It has at it were, a thoroughly permeable 'outer layer' through which the reflexive project of the self and externally formed abstract systems routinely enter. (Giddens 1991: 218)

The body, then, has taken on an interactive role which allows the individual to work on her body and exercise increased control over it. In this process, a paradox occurs: the more control is inflicted on the body, the more uncertain does its meaning become, obscuring the trust in the body's nature and the direction and form that the body can take in the future. As Shilling (2003) argues, this increased control and reliance on bodies results in increased uncertainty about *what the body may become*, making the late-modern self-body relation one of interaction and, simultaneously, one of distrust and fracture. For this reason, the late-modern embodied self has been described as existing in a state of *ambivalence* (Bauman 1991; see Chapters 5 and 6) that perpetuates feelings of anxiety both towards the self and towards the world. This is also important for determining the self-body relation in the context of imprisonment, where self-discipline and ambivalence about the future are central features of life in and after prison.

## **2.2 Body and society: The social, active and knowing body**

### ***Bodies in the context of control and social order***

Mauss' (1973) *Techniques of the Body*, first published in 1934, is one of the first attempts in the social sciences to understand the social components of bodily action. From an anthropological perspective, Mauss begins by observing everyday mundane activities such as walking, and monitors differences in these practices across cultures. He argues that it is through these *differences* that bodily activity attains sociological meaning. He admits that he previously assumed that physical activity could be classified as culturally inspired only when an artificial object was involved. He therefore presumed that the naked body alone was a purely "natural" body that acted unaffected from social power, relations and structures. In *Techniques of the Body*, he corrects this assumption by proposing that the body is 'man's [sic] first and most natural technical object' (1973: 72). He explores the social character of the body through performance, by explaining learned physical activity as tested activity from trusted social actors. Before exerting activity through and onto external instruments, the social actor initially performs selfhood and culture through her body. As he explains, the

enactment of a mundane physical activity takes place ‘in a series of assembled actions’ that, according to Mauss, are not constituted by the individual, but rather by ‘all his education, by the whole society to which he belongs, in the place he occupies in it’ (1973: 73).

This relation between nature and culture is also central in Mary Douglas’s (1970 [1996]) anthropology. However, when discussing the interaction between nature and culture, she does not set the “natural” in the physical body and the “cultural” in society. Instead, she argues that the “natural”, or what we consider universal across cultures, is not the material-biological body, but rather the interaction between two bodies: the individual/biological body and the social body. She argues that universality is reached in ‘the drive to achieve consonance in all levels of experience’ (Douglas 1996: 79) and suggests that the body constitutes a metaphor or a symbol of society. This is because embodied experience upholds cultural meanings and reflects the set social order from which it derives. Moreover, the body acts as a natural symbol of society; the human organism symbolises the interaction of parts – or individuals – within the structure of the whole – or a society (1996: 68). She concludes that the universality of the physical body exists only as the product of its social system. The capacity of the body to act as the *bond* in the relation between individual and society denotes its centrality in understanding social structures, as well as the actions and identities of social actors.

Following a structuralist-functionalist perspective, Turner (2008) conceptualises the body from the structural problems it creates for the management of stable social systems in modern societies. He summarises these problems into four dimensions. First the *need for societies to reproduce* themselves (2008:20-1), second, the *self-regulation of desire* as an inner body problem (2008:87), third, the *control of people in space* (2008:166), and finally the *representation of bodies in social space* as a problem of the external body. Turner (2008: 33) uses the concept of disease as a social condition which exemplifies why the individual performs certain social roles over the course of changing societies. In doing this, he identifies ‘a system of modes of control’ (2008: 156-7) which society directs onto the body in order to manage its functions and direct it towards its wider social values. The third and fourth problems of the body identified by Turner are particularly relevant to this thesis, and are, arguably, interrelated.

Turner (2008) explains that the control of people within spaces is achieved with an increase in surveillance and the bureaucratic organization and filing of population



statistics.<sup>26</sup> As travel into urban centres became more accessible and safer for women at the end of the nineteenth century, dominant forces within patriarchal structures were faced with an anxiety about women's growing independence. Turner suggests that to control this new phenomenon, the disease of agoraphobia made its appearance<sup>27</sup> within the growing psychological and medical fields of the time (2008: 98). The fear of women entering the public sphere, however, was further challenged in the twentieth century. As a result of the demands of industry and the First World War, women were now required in the labour market and agoraphobia gave way to a new social disease: the concern with the presentation of self through the body. Turner (2008) argues that with the emergence of capitalism, the presentation of selves became independent of one's institutional role and status, placing emphasis on 'face work and impression management' (Goffman 1959; Shilling 2003: 81). Turner writes:

The self is no longer located in heraldry, but has to be constantly constituted in face-to-face interactions, because consumerism and the mass market have liquidated, or at least blurred, the exterior marks of social and personal difference. (Turner 2008: 35)

The competitive pressure for self-presentation as a characteristic value of constant self-regulation is demonstrated by Turner through the emergence of anorexia nervosa,<sup>28</sup> the symptoms of which reflect the social pressure to strive for slenderness but also to present the self in an increasingly self-controlled and composed way (2008: 83).

The use of regulatory means to contain people in space is particularly evident with the birth of the prison (Foucault 1979). Following Turner's argument, the prison could be seen as a good example of the rise of surveillance technologies and the regulation of inmates through a series of bureaucratic means. The increasing use of imprisonment in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries illustrates societies' regulative means of controlling people in space and also shows that the inmates incapacitated in such spaces over different time periods and cultures reflect socially excluded groups that tend to deviate from prescribed norms (Foucault 1979; Sim 2009). Turner's analysis is relevant to the study of such regulative institutions, not only because the prison is a uniquely controlling environment that relies on the management of bodies in space, but also because it is a space where the modern preoccupation with self-presentation is a central feature of its inmate culture and interactions

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<sup>26</sup> See, for example, the first official statistics on crime in France in 1827 and England in 1857 (Turner 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Agoraphobia is the mental disease that expresses one's fear of leaving the home and appearing in public spaces. This phobia also expresses one's fear of being alone in busy settings. In Freudian terms, the agoraphobic is anxious about sexual seduction while repressing sexual attraction to strangers (Turner 2008; Pines 1993).

<sup>28</sup> Although self-starvation is a much more ancient phenomenon (particularly for religious purposes), anorexia nervosa was identified as a disease only in the nineteenth century, when it was observed among women with an aristocratic background. It was not until the twentieth century that medicine sought to explain the wider spread of anorexia nervosa across the social spectrum (Hepworth 1999).

(Crewe 2009; Jewkes 2012b). Turner's work highlights the pervasive relationship between prison and embodied inmates, and draws the complex image of modern institutions like the prison whose inmates express both the regulations of the prison as well as the pressures of outside society. This study derives influence from Turner's analysis to better understand the permeability of prison space and evaluate the relationship between prison and societal pressures on the making of women's self-identities (see Chapters 6 and 7).

### ***Social interaction and the making of active bodies***

Symbolic interactionist theory employs a variety of perspectives connected by the pragmatist tradition. A fundamental claim made by American pragmatists is that the world is constituted by human action and that human action is constituted by the world. This tradition also emphasises the study of 'subjectivity, meaning and consciousnesses' (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 3) which, according to interactionists, exist only as an outcome of lived experience, action and interaction. Therefore, it is no surprise that in these theoretical and social psychological accounts we can trace much of our sociological knowledge about the self and the active, social body.

Simmel (1908 [1997]) wrote that the act of seeing is not just an action but a form of interaction in a process whereby the act of seeing creates the self. Simmel explains:

[t]he eye has a uniquely sociological function. The union and interaction of individuals is based upon mutual glances ... [This union is] the most direct and purest reciprocity which exists anywhere ... By the glance which reveals the other, one discloses himself. By the same act in which the observer seeks to know the observed, he surrenders himself to be understood by the observer. The eye cannot take unless at the same time it gives. The eye of a person discloses his own soul when he seeks to uncover that of another. (Simmel 1997: 358)

This perspective resonates with Cooley's (1902 [1992]) argument that self-identity is forged through the imaginary awareness that an individual has of others. He explains that this practice is based on three processes: first the individual imagines how she appears to others, second she imagines how others judge her appearance and finally, from these processes, she develops a reflection regarding others' imagined views (1992: 151-152; see also Chapter 3 on body-image). The act of seeing is reflexive, and from the interactionist perspective, bodies are seen 'as an imagined reflection built of cues gleaned from others' (Waskul and Vannini 2006: 5). In this sense, embodiment is a form of reflexivity and the practice of reflexivity is contingent on embodiment (Crossley 2006; Chapter 3). Thus, and as it will be argued later on (Chapter 4), the theoretical perspective adopted in this thesis is a new approach in conducting reflexive research on imprisonment (Liebling 1999; Bosworth 1999).

### *Dramaturgical Bodies*

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective on the body illustrates that the body is rooted in social practices and is constantly produced and presented through everyday activity. He argues that through interaction and contextualisation bodies are *created*; and through socio-cultural rituals they are negotiated and remade. However, Goffman does not argue that individuals are autonomous. On the contrary, in his discussion of 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' (Goffman 1963: 35), he explains that mundane forms of non-verbal communication have an impact on how people choose to present their bodies and how people act through their bodies. He argues that the individual's capacity to manage her own body is mediated by social constraints and rules.

Overall, Goffman's writings on the body can be interpreted in three interlinked ways. First, he argues that individuals possess or own their material bodies and control how their bodies appear and perform in order to achieve successful social integration and social interaction. In this first feature, individual agency and subjectivity are central in monitoring the body's performance in social situations. Following from this, the second feature of Goffman's work alludes to a more social-constructionist perspective where he argues that the meanings that are attached to bodies by 'shared vocabularies of body idiom' are not easily controlled by individuals. Unlike Foucault, he is not arguing that bodies are entirely produced by social "technologies", but he does claim that non-verbal communication, as expressed through the body, is a central aspect of social interaction in public (see also Mead 1934 on gestures). This form of non-verbal communication refers to 'dress, bearing, movements and position, sound level, physical gestures, such as waving or saluting, facial decorations and broad emotional expressions' (Goffman 1963: 33). These practices of body idiom allow for the categorisation of behaviour and contribute to the development of hierarchies of people. In other words, they provide the central guidelines determining how the individual presents her body in everyday life. The last feature that is characteristic of Goffman's work is found in his view of the body as constituting a 'dual location' (Shilling 2003: 73) being both the possession of individuals but also having their meaning and purpose determined by society. Goffman (1959: 216-217) therefore, explains that the body is the mediating force between self-identity and social identity. He explains that the social influences upon the body become internalised in a way that give the individual a sense of self. Thus, he argues that social interaction is reliant on the embodied enactment of physical communicative symbols (Goffman 1959: 218).

Moreover, Goffman (1959: 164-166) argues that the body plays a crucial role in determining power relations and, in indirect ways, establishing social inequality. For example, certain bodily practices not only symbolise gender inequalities, but also *constitute* them (Goffman 1979). Bartky (1988 [1997]) expands this argument, demonstrating that bodies perform gender relations in ways that are often invisible and unrelated to physical force, allowing men's domination to take place in mundane everyday situations. A man can:

[s]teer a woman everywhere she goes: down the street, around corners, into elevators, through doorways, into her chair at the dinner table, around the dance floor. The man's movement is not necessarily heavy and pushy or physical in an ugly way; it is light and gentle but firm in the way of the most confident equestrians with the best trained horses. (Bartky 1997: 68)

The recognition of success that the social actor is likely to receive when she displays a well-managed body in her public performances, reflects the social rules and values upon which individuals are judged by others and by themselves. Goffman (1961: 47-49) explains that if an individual fails in her bodily appearance and performance, she can internalise this failure as part of her selfhood. A 'spoilt identity' acts as an internal stigmatisation of the self (1961: 63). In other words, social actors assess the worthiness of their own bodies as these are reflected by society's values, prejudices and popular opinions (Goffman 1968).

Goffman's (1968) analysis of stigma takes on particular importance when assessing bodily behaviour among prisoners and ex-prisoners. Changes of setting and of social rules can cause experiences of stigma more easily. In the extreme environment of the prison several failed encounters can lead to experiences of embarrassment which can constitute a serious threat to one's self-identity and self-esteem (see Chapter 6). An embarrassing situation may expose a gap between the social actor's "*virtual social identity*" and her "*actual social identity*". Virtual social identity refers to how an individual perceives herself, and actual social identity implies how other people view the individual (Goffman 1968: 12). If this gap is identified, particularly by a stigmatised individual, it is likely to spoil her sense of self and alienate her from society. This is because, as Goffman explains:

the stigmatised individual tends to hold the same beliefs about identity that we do ... the standards he has incorporated from the wider society equip him [*sic*] to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought to be. (1968: 17-18)

This analysis of the stigmatised individual is pertinent to our understanding of the immense amount of work, performance and body-management that stigmatised offending women have to endure in order to maintain social encounters in ways that also allow for an unspoilt sense of self. As this thesis demonstrates (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) internalised stigma is a

permanent feature of many women prisoners' self-perceptions (see also Moran 2012; 2013a).

Arguably Goffman tends to see the body's centrality in the relationship between self-identity and society only in the context of the interaction order (Shilling 2003); he thus neglects its capacity to influence more macro-structural domains, such as the organisation and management of institutions (see Howe 1994). As the quote at the start of this chapter suggests (Turner 2008: 41-2), bodies and our understanding of them are relevant to investigations of both micro- and macro-level relations and the prison serves as a good example of how bodies matter in both the micro-politics and the macro-structures of imprisonment. Moreover, a second criticism of Goffman's approach is that, like Foucault, he tends to focus on certain outside influences which determine the body's function (i.e. discourse or shared language of body idiom). This results in analyses that while focusing on the body, do not offer a clear understanding of what the body is and how it impacts individual agency. In this regard, similarly to Foucault, the ultimate meaning of the body ends up being ascribed by the mind, maintaining an (unintentional) dualist perspective.

### ***Body as society: Phenomenology and the lived body***

#### ***Inter-corporeality and perception***

So far, this chapter has considered the theoretical relevance of the "body". This section moves on to engage more specifically with the relevance of "embodiment". Csordas (1990; 1994) suggests that the notion of "embodiment" is theoretically more appropriate than "the body" because embodiment is the 'methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world'<sup>29</sup> (Csordas 1994: 10). In opposition to a purely social-constructionist model, a cultural phenomenological<sup>30</sup> account of the body concentrates on the lived experience of the body and treats it as a source of society.

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<sup>29</sup> According to this perspective, studies of embodiment are not studies about bodies. Instead, they are studies aiming to understand cultures and lived experience 'insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the world' (Csordas 1999: 143).

<sup>30</sup> *Phenomenology* is the 'study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view' (Smith 2008). As the philosophical study of how we experience, phenomenology came into being mainly through the works of Husserl (1910 [1965]), Heidegger (1962), Sartre (1943[1993]), and Merleau-Ponty (1962) and set out to study "phenomena" or how objects appear through the lens of subjective, lived experience. Within this perspective, conscious and self-aware experiences form the basis of investigation where experiences may vary from 'perception, thought, memory, emotion, desire and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity including linguistic activity' (Smith 2008). Moreover, phenomenology studies experiences under the conditions of their intentionality, thus also alluding to a study of the background conditions that lead and contextualise a lived experience.

Merleau-Ponty (1962: 160) views the body as our only vehicle for acting and existing in the social world and through which we experience our social and natural environment. This account argues that our world gains structure and meaning ‘through the medium of our bodily experience’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 30, 229). In other words, embodied actors gain existence ‘on the basis of the *practical* engagement they have with their surroundings and through the *intentionality* they develop as a result of the situatedness of embodied existence’ (Shilling 2005b: 55 emphasis added). The idea that individuals are ‘lived, intentional body subjects’ (Shilling 2005b:55) and are always connected with the world, suggests that they are progressively integrated into (and interact with) their social setting. Individuals synchronise with their setting and become aware of their abilities and limitations within the constraints of any given space. This involves a sense of a “somatic unity” and embodied awareness which has several pre-conditions. These include the creation of our “body schema” or bodily image, our ability for motility and the appreciation of the sensory means through which we experience and connect with the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962). It is for this reason that the physical manifestation of punishment and its lived experience call for a phenomenological perspective on the experience of the prison as expressed by *embodied active prisoners*.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) strives to describe the connection between bodies, space and the world *as they constitute each other*. In doing this, he explains that the lived and embodied experience of social or natural space is what composes the development of perception. The body is acting as a sort of nucleus of the world that is essential for the world’s effective maintenance. Merleau-Ponty explains:

Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly and with it forms a system. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 235)

According to this, the understanding of the world takes place through the *experiences of bodies*, and thus the method for investigating microcosms, such as the prison, is to investigate how these are perceived and experienced through the bodies that interact within them. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962:236) the social and symbolic significance of different spaces is derived from the embodied experience of space. He explains this with a critique of the discursive account of space:

[...] if the words ‘enclose’ and ‘between’ have a meaning for us, it is because they derive it from our experience as embodied subjects. In space itself independently of the presence of a psycho-physical subject, there is no direction, no inside and no outside. A space is ‘enclosed’ between the sides of a cube as we are enclosed between the walls of our room. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 236)

In this sense, embodiment precedes discourse by giving it its meaning. The meaning of space as constituted through the embodied experience of enclosure that prisoners have within it, is crucial to the understanding of the prison as both a symbol of punishment and a material space of confinement. It is in the perception of the prison space as confining, enclosed and separate from another – outside – space, that the prison gains its function and perpetuates its influence on both those inside and those outside (see also Wacquant 2001; 2010).

While giving meaning and definition to the prison space, the embodied prisoner, acknowledges her own self *within* the prison. This subjective meaning attached to the experience of imprisonment by the prisoner is influenced not only by the physical space within which she is enclosed, but also by other prisoners' inter-subjective reflections. There is an *inter-corporeality of experience* ranging from the perception of space, to the perception of other bodies within that space and, finally, the perception of one's own body as part of this space. Merleau-Ponty (1962) summarises the relationship between body and perception by arguing that the body *is* perception. This thesis adopts this perspective to argue that a theory of the (prisoner's) body is a theory of how the (prison) world is perceived:

Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body, just as every perception of my body is made explicit in the language of external perception. [...] The theory of the body schema is, implicitly a theory of perception. We have relearned to feel our body; we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which we have of it in *virtue of it always being with us* and of the fact that *we are our body*. In the same way we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far *we are in the world through our body*, and in so far as we perceive the world *with* our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and as it were, the subject of perception. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 239, emphasis added)

In other words, embodied perception of the world is an active engagement with what the world expects of us as bodies-selves. Thus, the interconnection between body and society is an invaluable theoretical resource for the sociological understanding of the self in society and, by extension, the interaction between body and imprisonment (Howe 1994).

### *The phenomenology of space*

*Dasein* – or the experience of being – Heidegger (1962) argues, relies on the correspondence between the experience of lived time and space. Heidegger distinguishes between mathematically calculated and geometrically organised space and the lived experience of spatiality. Lived spaces attain different symbolic meaning depending on the

roles they play in one's life. For example, the space of "home" is lived and embodied differently from the workplace, even if "home" is not necessarily a fixed place (Douglas 1991). However, imprisonment demands displacement from familiar spaces and the disruption of what is perceived as one's 'temporal life-world' (Leder 2004:5). Through her displacement to an unfamiliar, secluded space, not only does the prisoner lose the spaces with which she self-identified and considered "home" but, in the particulars of prison security and overall architectural design (Hancock and Jewkes 2011), the prisoner is also denied natural landscape and relies on a 'patch of dirt or sky' (Leder 2004:6). The lived experience of the prison space requires adjustment to a new visual field where the end of space is no longer the horizon, but rather, bars, fences and tall walls that separate the space of lived time inside from the inaccessible and "endless" space of the outside world. Being structured primarily as a mechanism of regulation, the prison does not provide a nested environment which sustains any meanings or associations with its surrounding spaces and communities. As Bollnow (1961) argues, the home is the centre space of one's lived experience, but the physical space of the prison challenges and reverses the symbolic meanings that were otherwise attached to the home. For example, the prison does not replace the home's capacity to provide security, privacy, freedom and comfort (Leder: 6; see also Ugelvik 2011; Chapters 5-7).

### *The phenomenology of time*

Heidegger (1962) identified a difference in the perception of lived time and our understanding of calculated clock or calendar time which has an *objective* quality because it exists independent of individual perceptions of time. In contrast, the lived experience of time is a subjective phenomenon that does not flow necessarily in the same progressive order as calculated clock time and, therefore, the experience of the past, present and future do not necessarily take the form of a consecutive timeline (Heidegger 1962). In fact, according to Heidegger (1962) in subjective perceptions of time, the future usually comes before the past and present:

Primordial and authentic temporality temporalizes itself in terms of the authentic future and in such a way that in having been futurally, it first of all awakens the Present. *The primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future.* The priority of the future will vary according to the ways in which the temporalizing of inauthentic temporality itself is modified but it will come to the fore even in the derivative kind of 'time'. (Heidegger 1962: 378, emphasis in the original)

Heidegger implies that ambitions, expectations and plans for the future are what constitute the organisation of our present. This un-progressive experience of lived time also means that we do not experience the passing of time in conjunction with the passing of calculated clock



time. For example, we experience time passing “too slowly” or “too quickly” depending on our lived experiences and the meaning we attach to them along with the emotions we derive from them. Obviously, then, the experience of lived time is pertinent to the experience of “doing time” in prison.

Everyday activities such as sleeping or eating combine to give a ‘textured temporal field’ (Leder 2004:3) that is subject to change by life experiences that go beyond the routines of everyday life. For instance, drug addiction, poverty and homelessness, along with loss of ambition and hope for the future, can dislocate the lived experience of time (see Chapters 5 and 7). Nevertheless, these disruptions can constitute a new rhythm that defines one’s idea of life. A prison sentence, however, can radically defuse this experience because, first of all, punishment relies in taking away time from one’s life: a prison sentence of two years means two years *taken away* from someone’s life as she knows it (Leder 2004). Although the prison sentence is given from the calculated temporal field of the calendar, it translates itself into time taken away from the field of lived time. In this sense, time becomes *the* symbol of the offender’s disempowerment and, in practice, the sentence becomes a time that needs to be served (Leder 2004; Cohen and Taylor 1972). This is also relevant in the daily experience of imprisonment: the prisoner follows the prescribed prison timetable without living time in prison *out of choice*, or as she would necessarily choose to pass lived time outside prison.

Moreover, the experience of imprisonment changes the symbolic meaning and the temporal order of the past, present and future. The lived experience of the future may no longer be about planned activity, and the experience of self may no longer be about *acting towards* the future, but rather, about passive expectation (Minkowski 1970; also discussed by Jewkes 2012b; Rowe 2012). The problem with living the future through expectation rather than action is that one expects the future to come to one, rather than being actively pursued. This expected future takes agency away from one’s present as it ‘absorbs all becoming’ into a present that is controlled and limited into a skewed existence (Minkowski 1970: 89). The present within prison is inevitably not purposeful (contrary to what imprisonment is aimed to be); this is because the prisoner experiences time in prison as a separate period between her past and future which cuts across her life narrative and exists only in expectation of the release date. It is precisely this transformation in the experience of lived time in prison that threatens the prisoner’s capacity to retain a sense of individuality (Leder 2004; Cohen and Taylor 1972) and is particularly relevant today, where self-identity has become associated with ambivalence and uncertainty generated by the fast pace of modern life and the anxieties this entails (Bauman 1991; Giddens 1991). To sum up, lived

experience of altered time and space in prison is a unique experience that the inmate perceives in an embodied manner and as suggested in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, the prisoner uses her body and the subjective meanings it can provide, to adjust to and cope with the distinctive space and time that constitutes imprisonment.

### **2.3 Pained bodies and emotions**

#### ***The 'dys appearing' body***

Drew Leder (1990) argues that the body is consciously experienced; that is, we are aware of ourselves as embodied, only when our bodies fail to perform their instrumental function. During successful instrumental action, the body tends to be neglected from our field of perception. He explains that:

[w]hilst in one sense the body is the most abiding and inescapable presence in our lives, it is also characterised by absence. That is, one's own body is rarely the thematic object of experience ... the body, as a ground of experience ... tends to recede from direct experience. (Leder 1990: 1)

He suggests that our everyday lives are characterised mostly by the *absence* rather than the presence of our bodies. The body regains our attention only when we are ill, when our bodies are no longer socially adept or at times of emotional pain and lack of control (1990:135). Thus, bodily perception relies on painful experience and arguably experiences of imprisonment are embodied precisely because imprisonment is a painful experience.

During painful experience, Leder (1990) suggests, the body *reappears* in a painful, vengeful manner. He uses the term '*dys-appearance*' to illustrate this reappearance of the body:

The body appears as thematic focus, but precisely in a *dys* state- *dys* is from the Greek prefix signifying 'bad', 'hard', or 'ill', and is found in English words such as 'dysfunctional' [...] At times of illness one may experience one's body as more or less 'unusable' [...] the sick body may be experienced as that which 'stands in the way', an obstinate force interfering with our projects. (Leder 1990: 84)

This thesis suggests that a direct effect of punishment is the painful *re-appearance* of the body into the prisoner's self-awareness (Chapter 5). Therefore, the body of the prisoner can be investigated as a *body in pain*, enduring and living a unique experience of confinement that is emotionally and corporeally harmful.

It is worth noting here that Leder's theory was scrutinised for being applicable only to groups of people for whom states of embodiment are unique exceptions to an otherwise non-embodied consciousness. This theory, for example, would not apply so easily to

populations for whom starvation and hunger are daily phenomena (Shilling 2003). Similarly, one could challenge the use of this perspective in the case of women prisoners whose profiles suggest ongoing experiences of deprivation and pain prior to imprisonment. However, this thesis suggests that it is the *combination* of imprisonment with the past experiences of deprivation that constitute to this painful bodily presence and awareness in prison (Chapter 5 and 7). In other words, such “dys-appearance” does not occur because the prison causes direct physical pain to inmates, but it occurs due to the various forms of *control and regulation* and the *emotional deprivation* the prisoners endure, along with the inscribed (gendered) control that women bring into prison. Arguably, all these factors combined translate into an unsettling, ambivalent self-awareness that is embodied and sketches the unique experience of punishment (see Chapters 5-7). As Leder explains, ‘in a significant sense, the lived body helps to constitute [the] world as experienced [...] the lived body is not just one thing *in* the world but a way in which the world comes to be’ (1990: 25).

Importantly, Leder extends this state of bodily “dys-appearance” to *emotional states*, which arguably resonate even more with the notion of the ‘pains of imprisonment’. Following Descartes’ conceptualisation of “passions”, Leder illustrates how emotions are central to the making of lived experience (1990: 134).

[Like bodies] the same is true of emotions ... On the one hand, they are an aspect of our ecstatic relatedness to the world. We always experience our environment through a particular mood ... Moreover; emotion inaugurates our motor projects, propelling us towards desired goals. (Leder 1990:136)

He explains that when under our control, emotions are also absent from our awareness, meaning that we are aware of our emotions only in circumstances in which we feel that our emotions overwhelm our sense of being. Again, like the body, emotions (*dys*)-appear in our sensory perception only when they are a ‘disruptive force, hindering our projects’ (1990: 137). Leder argues that this emotional *dys*-appearance is embodied:

Just as the body is remembered when pain or sickness interferes with our intentions, so too, when powerful passions rebel. At such times, the body dys-appears, surfacing as an alien or threatening thing ... It is not only the visceral dimension of passion but the complexity of human appetite in general that gives rise to dys-appearance ... As such, the desiring body can begin to crumble and self-diverge, as does the organic body in illness. We thematise the body at such problematic times in a way we need not do when we are unified. (Leder 1990: 137)

At times of emotional or physical pain then, the attention that we begin to pay to our bodies also means that we reconceptualise our sense of being in deeply embodied ways, feeling and living the world *through* our bodies.

### ***Emotions and bodies: Towards a sociology of embodied punishment***

This chapter and the following chapter suggest that bodies are central to “who” we are; our identity and presentation are constituted through an active engagement with our bodies and their social function. This section goes on to suggest that if bodies are important to how we experience and perceive the world and, in turn, have an impact on how we construct our identities, then bodies are also relevant to how we *feel* about ourselves and the world. It highlights the communicative nature of bodies and suggests, as Brandt (2006) and Sanders (2006) have argued that bodies represent emotions and meaning in social interactions. As Mead (1934) also suggested bodies converse the self to the world through meaningful and emotive gestures and images that can often express how an individual perceives her own image in relation to the world. Importantly then, if we are to accept that bodies are key determinants of self-identity, then we must also accept that we cannot talk about selves as (just) material bodies, but instead, we need to consider identity through *emotional, self-aware bodies*.

The point of departure in making this argument is Giddens’ (1991) analysis of the relationship between bodies and identities and his assertion that the body is central to the project of reflexive self-identities. Having said this however, Giddens maintains a dualist approach to mind-body and suggests that the body becomes an ‘object of choice’ (Budgeon 2003: 36). But as argued by Budgeon, it is important to expand the study of bodies beyond their conception as objects:

The body serves not simply as a natural foundation of or passive surface upon which meanings are inscribed by systems of signification, but...there is an irreducibility between the subject and object such that, in order to understand the ways in which young women actively live their embodied identities, we need to develop an approach which can envision a body beyond the binary of materiality and representation- the body not as an *object*, but as an *event*. (Budgeon 2003: 36, emphasis in the original)

The body as an event, active and reactive to its social environment, is relevant to how social actors’ embodied identities employ the body for the expression and actualisation of emotions. The relationship between emotions and embodiment is central here because it is argued that understanding the feelings that make up the experience of imprisonment entails an understanding of women’s embodied perception and reaction to the prison environment.

As a number of analysts have suggested, the study of emotions is a highly complex inquiry that demands the collaboration of a number of disciplines (Williams and Bendelow 1998; Bendelow 2009; Craib 1995; Ahmed 2004; Hemmings 2005; Vogler 2001), and arguably a psychosocial approach that intersects the psychic, social and cultural dimensions

of lived experiences is suitably positioned to address the complexity of emotions. The sociology of emotions has to consider a psychoanalytic perspective as well as a sociological account of emotions; a failure to do this, Craib (1995: 151) argued, could end up limiting emotions to mere socio-historical constructions. Craib also suggests that a sociological account of emotions should avoid rationalising them into ideas and should consider them as 'necessarily contradictory' (1995: 155). Understanding emotions, therefore, requires an engagement with different forms of coping or '*emotion work*' (Hochschild 1983 [2003]; see Chapter 7), able to distinguish between two forms of coping that emphasize both the internal and social constitution of emotions:

[There is] the 'internal' work of coping with contradiction, conflict and ambivalence and the 'external' work of reconciling what goes on inside with what one is supposed or allowed to feel [...] There is no simple relation between the experience and the expression of emotion, and it becomes even more complex when one moves on to talking about one's emotions rather than expressing them. Indeed talking about emotions....can often be a very effective way of avoiding the experience of emotions...On the other hand, actions including the action of not talking, can be very effective expressions of emotion. (Craib 1995: 155-156)

Sociologists have emphasised the relevance of emotions in the study of relationships and interactions (Bendelow 2009), but as Craib explains, the social function of emotions can also pose a methodological problem. He questions how sociologists can ask their participants to talk about their emotions 'in a way that can perhaps take them to the reality beneath the ideology' (1995: 157) when it is evident in client-therapist relations that people tend to express emotions through performances that are familiar to them rather than seeking genuine expressions of their feelings. As he suggests, it is common that people will express more readily what their listeners want to hear rather than what they sincerely feel. This analysis leads to the conclusion that emotions are shared entities which cannot be observed as discrete, individual emotions isolated from those who express and those who witness them (see Chapter 4 for the methodological implications of this).

As Sarbin (2001:217) argues, emotional life is better studied as a form of 'narrative plot' where emotional states are roles we perform, to ourselves and others. Sarbin further argues that such emotional expressions are embodied, and their bodily manifestation is what makes emotions 'real' and actualised. Emotions therefore cannot be expressed nor understood without an appreciation of both their social and their embodied qualities. For this reason, deconstructing deeply complex, different and dangerous emotions, which prevail in extreme experiences such as imprisonment, requires attentiveness to the close *relationship* between social structures, emotions and bodies.

### *Deconstructing pain*

A sociological study of embodiment and emotions suggests that one way to understand the emotional aspect of experiences of punishment is through the notion of pain. Sociologists of health and illness demonstrate that apart from being a medical “problem”, pain is also an everyday experience and an embodied emotion (Bendelow and Williams 1995: 139). As Morris (1991) argues, the experience of pain is the result of the ‘interaction of bodies, minds and cultures’, making its subjective experience central to its meaning (1991: 1-2).

In his conceptualisation of pain, Leder explains that the pained body makes a ‘telic demand’ (1990: 81-82), where on the one hand, it seeks understanding and meaning for its unique experience, while on a more pragmatic level, it seeks to alleviate the experience of pain by acting not *from* the body but *towards* it (Bendelow and Williams 1995: 148). For this reason, phenomenologists have argued that experiencing pain may entail acting *against* the body (see Chapter 7) forming a dualist relationship between self and body<sup>31</sup> (Leder 1990: 70-74; Bendelow and Williams 1995) whereby the body becomes alien to the self (Leder 1990: 29). Consequently, we can argue that the ‘pains of imprisonment’ are often directed *on to* the body in a process of both active embodiment and emotional fragmentation between self and its lived embodied experience of pain.

Bendelow and Williams (1995: 151) suggest that understanding embodied emotions can expand the conceptualisation of the pained body from mere physical sensation to incorporate emotional, cognitive and spiritual turmoil. As Hochschild (1983 [2003]: 17) points out, emotions exist at the intersection between body and mind, nature and culture, and their ‘signal function’ is rendered essential for our survival and protection from danger. Bendelow and Williams (1995) suggest that feelings of self-punishment and self-blaming are common among sufferers allowing the individual a personal identification with the painful experience. This perspective can help explore in more detail how the prisoner internalises and reflects upon her punishment. As Bendelow and Williams (1995: 154) explain, as the ‘sensation of something wrong, or bad, pain may be identified with moral evil, the result of an external, malignant force, or a punishment for our sins’.

The experiences of imprisoned women represent an interesting example of such symbolic representations of pain, particularly when their experience of pain is expressed

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<sup>31</sup> Indeed, through this dualist metaphysics, Leder (1990:138) explains why classical philosophy maintained a Cartesian perspective and tended to turn to the body only in its instances of error, weakness or flaw.

through self-injury (Plugge et al. 2006), suicide attempts (Liebling, 1994; 1999) or even through mental illness, dietary disorder or the trauma of past abuse (Corston 2007). Such realities, this thesis suggests, place the female prisoner's experiences as central to the study of the pained body. The thesis considers the example of self-injury as an accurate illustration of the significant interaction between bodies and emotions in the prison context.

#### *The case of self-injury as 'emotion work'*

Self-injury has been sociologically linked to a range of socio-cultural contexts (Adler and Adler 2007) and it has been explained as a 'coping mechanism' in dealing with a harmful environment (Kilty 2006; Liebling 1995). Clinical conceptualisations of self-injury, however, view it as an 'individual pathology' linked with 'intellectual development difficulties, emotional dysfunctions and physical and behavioural maladaptation' (Thomas et al. 2006: 193). Self-injury involves 'cutting, burning, or hitting of the outside body' (Chandler 2012: 443) and is generally defined as:

[...] the deliberate act of physically hurting oneself, usually without conscious suicidal intent, in a manner that results in superficial rather than traumatic, damage of the body tissue. (Thomas et al. 2006: 193)

However, there is no clinical consensus on the aetiology of this practice, and the conceptualisation of self-injury often involves several clinical biases (Chandler 2012). Research on self-injury tends to focus on certain groups, including women (Harris 2000) or young people (Scourfield et al. 2011), and common arguments include that self-injury starts during early adolescence and may continue for ten or more years (Thomas et al. 2006: 193). The most common reason for self-inflicted injury reported in self-report studies is 'affect regulation' (Klonsky 2007). This clinical term refers to the regulation of emotions including 'stopping negative feelings', 'relieving anxiety' or 'stress management' (2007: 230-1).

Therefore, more recently, self-injury has been studied as an embodied practice in the context of 'emotion work' (e.g. Chandler 2012; Leaf and Schrock 2011). The relevance of Hochschild's (1983) concept of 'emotion work' is helpful, because it suggests three inseparable strategies of work, mental, physical and expressive, and it has taken account of the role of embodiment in "doing" emotion work, acknowledging that emotional activity is often directed at the body.

I use the term *emotion labour* to mean the management of feeling to create a publically observable facial and bodily display ... [It] has *exchange value*. I use the synonym terms *emotion work* and *emotion management* to refer to these same acts done in a private context where they have *use value*. (Hochschild 1983: 7, emphasis in the original)

Moreover, Rose (2003) suggests that late-modern individuals' concerns about mental or emotional issues are conceptualised (by relevant experts and popular discourse) as problems with the physical brain. Therefore, individuals 'define key aspects of one's individuality in bodily terms ... and try to reform, cure or improve oneself by acting on that body' (2003: 54). In Rose's (2003) words, this is a form of 'somatic individuality' which can also be traced in treatments and therapies specialising in mental health problems through physical remedies, including the use of drugs. This modern attitude to the ways in which we interpret and deal with certain "emotional problems" has had a wider impact on how late-modern individuals perceive and act on their emotional lives. Using Rose's concept of somatic individuality, Chandler (2012) suggests that self-injury can be explained as embodied emotion work that aims to affect the self via the body but in a non-pharmaceutical manner (2012: 446). Thus, self-injury could be seen as a therapeutic practice of *self-healing*, insofar as it is an effort to alleviate emotional and other kinds of pain.

The concepts of "control" and "release" are central in accounts of self-injury practices and, as Chandler argues 'these [self-injury] narratives could be seen to reflect contradictory socio-cultural understandings of (emotional) health, simultaneously expressing the need/desire for both release and control' (2012: 446). Participants in Leaf and Schrock's (2011) study explained that 'the sight of blood on the skin [coincided] with a sense of release' that was associated with feelings of 'clarity' and a sense of catharsis. The embodied actualisation of harm through the body among those who practice self-injury because they feel out of control, is not met with a desire to punish their body/self; instead, it is felt as a pleasurable experience that combines emotional release and a mastering of the emotional body. Indeed, Leaf and Schrock's (2011) participants explain that their ability to control how, and how much, they would cut themselves gave them a needed sense of control over their lives.

Individuals who practice self-injury have also reported that this practice elicits emotions at times in which they felt *anaesthetised*. A common theme among participants in existing studies is that the visualisation of pain through self-injury makes the elicited emotions more "real" and therefore more "authentic", than internalised feelings (Leaf and Schrock 2011: 157). This *sense of authenticity* is related to expressing individual agency onto the body and challenging the self's socially prescribed objectification. In these instances, the materiality of the body can give a sense of reality to the individual. The participants in Leaf and Schrock's (2011: 161) study explained that self-injury allowed them



a sense of effectiveness and emotional control, which in turn gave them a sense of needed *empowerment*.

Contrary to Hochschild's (1983) discussion of bodily emotion work as a process of changing the physical symptoms of unwanted feelings by, for example practising deep breathing, Leaf and Schrock show 'how self injurers create physical symptoms' instead of using pre-existing ones, to control and understand their emotions (2011: 164). In their concluding remarks, they make a comment that is particularly applicable to self-injurers in prison:

[...] we fear that isolating, institutionalising and stigmatising self-injurers... likely increases their feelings of disempowerment, distress and inauthenticity- feelings that could further drive self-injury underground. (Leaf and Shrock 2011: 165)

To sum up, the existing literature on the practice of self-injury alludes to four possible goals which the self-injurer may be pursuing with her harming practice. First, her intention may be self-punitive, whereby she harms her body as a response to reflecting upon shameful acts. Second, self-injury may also entail an eagerness to relieve the body/self from emotional anxieties and pains, working therefore as an active process of self-healing that reflects the late-modern attitude towards health propagating attitudes of self-control and release (see also Chapter 3). Third, self-injury may be a process of self-actualisation, whereby the emotions felt are visually actualised and become "real", allowing the self-injurer a sense of empowerment and vitality. Finally, in the context of imprisonment, self-injury is also an active attempt to cope with the 'pains of imprisonment' that arguably entails elements of all three of the above. Understanding self-injury in prison therefore, involves an understanding of women's attitudes towards their embodied identities and emotions; understanding these, in turn, requires an understanding of women's backgrounds and emotional self-perceptions as well as an understanding of their reactions to imprisonment. In their collective analysis, an intersectional consideration of the role of gendered identity is centrally important in understanding the interaction of emotions and embodiment in the practice of self-injury (Chapter 7).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed post-structuralist, interactionist and phenomenological perspectives found in sociological analyses on the body. All of them study the body both in relation to and as a construct of society (Turner 2008; Foucault 1979; Butler 1993; Goffman 1959; 1963), or analyse it as a constituent of society (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Heidegger 1962;

Leder 1990; 2004). Although these perspectives have distinct features, their viewpoints often enmesh and comprise each other. Engagement with all three of these perspectives is necessary for this thesis because it aims to theoretically introduce the body to prisons research and to suggest a plural perspective on it. Such an approach would acknowledge both the social inscription and cultural function of bodies and would at the same time, recognize that bodies are the source of individual subjectivity and perception. This plurality and often *ambivalence* of bodies alludes to both their complexity and to the wealth of knowledge derived from bodies. The works discussed in this chapter are by no means an exhaustive literature review of the sociologies of embodiment. Instead, by providing a wide, yet not exhaustive, theoretical overview, the chapter sets the theoretical foundations upon which this thesis justifies its perspective on *embodied experience* as a relevant means to understand women's imprisonment.

The concept of "pain" as a corporeal, emotional and socio-cultural notion was considered in order to suggest that dualist perspectives, separating mind/body, in the study of prisoner experiences, offer an incomplete account of both the experience of imprisonment and the emotional process of self-making in prison. In suggesting the 'pains of imprisonment' are embodied, this chapter has demonstrated that we can employ the body as a "tool" of knowledge about punishment and derive from it nuanced aspects of the lived experience of imprisonment. Sociological theories of pain (Leder 1990; Williams and Bendelow 1998) helped to hypothesize that in being an extreme and evidently painful experience, imprisonment activates in the prisoner a state of bodily awareness that becomes essential to her experience of it. It will be argued in the following chapters that the prisoner becomes aware of herself as embodied and re-works her identity and presentation through an active consideration of the limits and potential of her bodily being in and out of prison. As this chapter has suggested, studying the body as a mere object is not helpful. Rather, and as interactionists have shown, the body is better understood as a process or an event. Sanders explains that '[the body] is constantly becoming something else and is an ongoing social accomplishment, as those who inhabit bodies "do" them' (2006: 283). The active potential and limits of the body will be further explored in the following chapter which considers the relevance of the *gendered lived body* to the study of women's imprisonment.

## Chapter 3

### Sketching a feminist perspective on embodiment for a feminist critique of imprisonment

Women are somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men. (Grosz 1994: 14)

Being-a-woman is always already there as the ontological precondition for my existential becoming a subject. (Braidotti 2011: 271-2)

If the body is not a thing, it is a situation ...  
it is the instrument of our grasp upon the world,  
a limiting factor for our projects[...]  
consciousness without a body or an immortal  
human being is rigorously inconceivable. (de Beauvoir 1949: 24)

Philosophical engagement with embodiment is a relatively recent project in the history of western philosophy. In most of our history of knowledge, the body was interpreted as a biological object, separate from our capacity for rationality and a potential source of chaos and disturbance that had to be managed. The Cartesian separation between mind and body, feminists suggest, involves also an inherent separation and differentiation between man and woman which connects the female to the body and thus, renders her more distant from the rational functions of the mind (Grosz 1994). Feminist theorists have engaged with the study of corporeality to challenge this dismissive typology and dualist dichotomy and by developing an account of sexual difference, have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the relation between embodiment, subjectivity and identity.

Following from the theoretical perspective drawn in Chapter 2, this chapter reviews feminist perspectives on bodies and embodiment. The aim of this chapter is to engage with a feminist analytical framework on the body in order to outline its relevance for the study of women's imprisonment within a feminist criminological account. It engages with feminist accounts of the body, starting from de Beauvoir's (1949) existential phenomenology, followed by a review of feminist-phenomenological work found in more contemporary feminist analyses (Moi 1999; Young 2005) and psychoanalytic research on the self-body relation (Irigaray 1985a; Spivak 1981; Grosz 1994; Kristeva 1980; 1982). The chapter also considers the relevance of feminist accounts on sexual difference and provides an evaluation of post-structuralist feminist work on materiality (Butler 1990; 1993). The chapter highlights that the body is a central analytic device in feminist theory and invites feminist criminology to engage theoretically in understanding the criminalised, stigmatised, punished, excluded and gendered body. The feminist contribution on corporeality provides us with a theory of

embodiment in relation to sexual difference and also an account of the ‘specific contextual materiality of the body’ in relation to racial and class differences (Price and Shildrick 1999: 5).

The second part of the chapter evaluates key themes drawn in feminist literature that are relevant to women’s imprisonment. It focuses on central aspects of women’s gendered representation and appearance; such as the conceptualisation of “fat” and body size, clothing and the fashioned body in consumerist societies, as well as the experience of disease and health. By examining the gendered aspects of the body the chapter prepares for an evaluation of the prison experience in relation to theoretical ideas about the discipline and control of women’s bodies in consumerist, modern societies. The theoretical topics selected in this second part of the chapter are themes I return to in the empirical findings, connecting them to participants’ sense of self in and after prison (Chapters 5-7).

### **3.1 Situated body as second sex and the politics of the particular**

In their earlier scholarly appearance, feminists approached the concept of the body with suspicion. They avoided references to women’s embodiment and chose to highlight the rational strength of the female mind. Indeed some of these earlier feminist works endorsed the mind-body dualism to ‘break any suggested determinist link between corporeal characteristics, mental faculties and social life’ (Lennon 2010: 2). Nevertheless, the centrality of the body in addressing sexual difference and women’s unequal social position is apparent in early feminist writings<sup>32</sup>. From the nineteenth century onwards, feminist campaigns emphasised women’s rights to control and decide what happens to their bodies (Lennon: 3). In maintaining the mind-body dualism however, such early feminist work approached the body as an object separate from the self, and over which the self had rights (Lennon: 4).

Challenging this approach, Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal text *The Second Sex* directed theoretical attention to the relationship between body and self and sparked the beginning of the important distinction between sex and gender as the product of an engaged philosophical discussion on sexual difference. Following other phenomenologists (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Satre 1943 [1993]), de Beauvoir clarified that ‘presence in the world vigorously implies the positioning of a body that is both a thing of the world and a point of view of this

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<sup>32</sup> For example, Bordo (1993 [2003]) provides the example of Wollstonecraft’s 1792 reference to the disciplining of the female body as an illustration of feminism’s preoccupation with the disciplined body prior to Foucault’s conceptualisation of disciplinary technology and biopower.

world' (1949 [2011]: 24). Her engagement with the body as a central analytic tool for the understanding of lived experience can be found in her main argument: that bodily existence, and the point of view it derives, is experienced differently for men and women. She argues that such differences in lived experience cannot be explained by biological differences but are constituted by socio-economic constraints. The thesis adopts the idea that lived experiences are gendered and explores how such gendered accounts can shed light into how prison is experienced differently by women.

In the first chapter of *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir reviews the biological differences in the process of reproduction, as well as sexual differences in human bodies which limit women's position in the organization of everyday life. In doing this, she accepts that there are biological 'facts' that differentiate males from females, but argues that the interpretation of women as Other, or as inferior to men, is derived not from these biological facts but from the meanings attributed to them. As she explains, the material or physiological fact of the female body alone cannot explain the implications entailed in the duality of man – woman:

It is not as a body but as a body subjected to taboos and laws that the subject gains consciousness of and accomplishes himself. (de Beauvoir: 48)

This distinction between biological 'facts' and the meanings and significance attached to them, sparked the start of the significant difference drawn by feminist theorists between biological sex and socially constructed gender. Sex is considered a biological characteristic, whereas, gender is regarded as the socially constituted meaning and interpretation given to sex. Gender is therefore understood as socially, culturally and historically fluid as reflected in de Beauvoir's famous statement 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman' (1949 [2011]: 293). Having said that, she is also aware that biological 'facts' are not fixed but often constructed from cultural influences. She therefore explains that sexual difference is not determined through biological characteristics, and biology cannot explain how the body is lived. 'It is through existence that the facts [of difference] are manifest' (1949 [2011]: 388) and it is only through the body's experiences that one's body attains meaning.

In the second volume of *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir provides a phenomenological account of how womanhood is lived in different stages from childhood, to marriage and motherhood onto maturity and old age. She highlights in this part of the text that the female body is lived in *specific situations* and is therefore, not the mere product of biological fact. She explores in some detail the experience of living the female body as an object, underscoring the internalised *gaze* women are educated and socialised to live by. Under this

gaze their bodies are lived in restraint, being conscious of their objectified position in the world. In her attempt to offer a descriptive phenomenology of how the female body is lived and felt in different stages of life, de Beauvoir has been criticised for offering a particularly negative picture (Lennon 2010: 6). Unlike feminists from the Anglo-American tradition in the 1970s and 1980s and psychoanalytic feminism, de Beauvoir focused explicitly on the experience of difference as a negative and limiting endeavour. Feminist work in the latter part of the twentieth century however, sought to turn such sexual difference into a positive project of pride (Braidotti 1994). Thus, de Beauvoir's work inspired much of the work that followed in the 1970s and 1980s and recently promoted a return to existential phenomenology in feminist scholarship. Arguably, there is much to derive about the lived experience of women's bodies in this more contemporary rereading of de Beauvoir's existential phenomenology. To engage more with the relevance of this feminist phenomenology, the thesis takes particular inspiration from the works of Iris Marion Young and Toril Moi.

***Phenomenology Revisited: A return to bodily lived-experience in contemporary feminist theory***

According to phenomenologists, embodied experience is constituted in situations which combine the biological and social qualities of the body so that the two cannot be disentangled. As Merleau-Ponty explains:

It is impossible to superimpose on man [*sic*] a lower layer of behaviour which one chooses to call 'natural', followed by a manufactured, cultural or spiritual world. Everything is both manufactured and natural in man, as it were, in the sense that there is not a word, not a form of behaviour which does not owe something to purely biological being – and which at the same time does not elude the simplicity of animal life, and cause forms of vital behaviour to deviate from their pre-ordained direction, through a sort of leakage and through a genius of ambiguity which might serve to define man. (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 220)

Influenced by both de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, contemporary feminist theorists (Bartky 1990; Young 2005; Alcoff 2006; Weiss 1999; 2002) expose various instances of embodied experience by looking at bodies from an intersectional perspective (e.g. looking at bodily aspects of race, class, gender, age, disability and disease) to understand how such experiences of the body affect women's subjectivity and social relations.

For example, in a collection of essays, Iris Marion Young (2005) discusses women's everyday embodied experiences including experiences of pregnancy, dressing, throwing, menstruating and coping with old age. In the seminal essay 'Throwing Like a Girl', Young refers to studies that compare differences in the ways in which girls and boys approach

physical tasks such as throwing, to observe a characteristic inhibition in girls' movements. Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty, who suggests that during intentional activity we cannot perceive our bodies as mere objects, she suggests girls and women expose inhibited movements during purposeful activity because they partly experience their bodies as objects:

The modalities of feminine bodily existence have their root in the fact that feminine existence experiences the body as a mere thing – a fragile thing, which must be picked up and coaxed into movement, a thing that exists as looked at and acted upon. To be sure, any lived body exists at a material thing as well as a transcending subject. For feminine bodily existence, however, the body is often lived as a thing that is other than it, a thing like other things in the world...[a woman] remains rooted in immanence, is inhibited, and retain a distance from her body as transcending movement and from engagement in the world's possibilities. (Young 2005: 39)

Young concludes that women experience their bodies as both objects and subjects reflecting their social position in society. This is important as it highlights the relevance of embodied experience in understanding subjectivity and self-perception in the prison environment which replicates many of the norms and structures of society and imposes these in a much less compromising and more austere manner. Women's self-perceptions as both objects and subjects are also important in understudying how the process of self-making is influenced by the prison experience.

Examining bodily experiences that are specific to women, for example pregnancy, Young goes on to suggest that womanhood is constituted on the individual, everyday level of feeling and living the body. She expands Moi's (1999) invitation that calls for a replacement of the problematic concepts and classificatory categories of sex and gender with the more experientially grounded and less essentialist concept of the *lived body*. Toril Moi (1999: 46) argues that sex/gender are 'useless starting points for a theory of the body and subjectivity' which arguably, are paradoxically constructed and maintained by poststructuralist theorists whose very aim is to deconstruct these categories. She suggests instead of attempting to deconstruct obviously faulty concepts, we should search for new approaches. Moi argues that the conceptual category of the lived body avoids biological reductionism, while at the same time is able to grasp the significance of materiality in the making of subjectivity, something that the reductionism of post-structuralist feminism falls short of. Arguably materiality is an important aspect of identity and agency which the discursive categories of sex and gender tend to override (Grosz 1994). The concept of the lived body implies that it is considered as a material body that is a subject of culture, and which thus appropriates its own unique and *particular* perspective to oppressive categories such as sex/gender.

To consider the body as a situation...is to consider both the fact of being a specific body and the meaning that concrete body has for the situated individual. This is not

the equivalent of either sex or gender. The same is true for 'lived experience' which encompasses our experience of all kinds of situations (race, class, nationality etc) and is a far more wide-ranging concept than the highly psychologising concept of gender identity. (Moi 1999: 81)

Similarly, it could be argued that in the case of studies on 'prisoner identity', the constructs of gender or race tend to limit the multiplicity of situated lived experiences and deny the body the diversity of experience it can express. While feminist criminology enhanced criminological theory and practice by drawing attention onto gender-aware perspectives, it could be argued that the category of gender is a problematic concept for understanding the subjectivity of women's lived experiences and 'deviance', particularly as these have been described to exist within *and* outside normative notions of femininity (Carlen 1983; 1998). Thus, the more encompassing and less essentialist notion of the lived body could offer a new theoretical angle from which to approach women's experiences in the criminal justice system as both objects and as subjects.

Young engages with the possibility of the lived body as a new concept for the study of subjectivity and suggests that it could overturn reliance on the dualist, binary categories of nature/culture and man/woman:

A category of the lived body, moreover, need not make sexual difference dimorphous; some bodies have physical traits like those of men in certain aspects, those of women in others. People experience their desires and feeling in diverse ways that do not neatly correlate with sexual dimorphism or heterosexual norms. (Young 2005: 16-17)

Having said this, Young cautions that while the concept of the lived body is a useful category for the study of subjectivity and identity, this does not mean that it can expand to include all of feminist theory's *political* aims.

The debates about gender and essentialism that Moi aims to bring to a close with her arguments have, I think, tended to narrow the interests of feminists and queer theorists to issues of experience, identity and subjectivity....I want to suggest that a concept of gender is [still] important for theorising social structures and their implications for the freedom and wellbeing of individuals. (Young 2005: 19)

This thesis does not deny the theoretical and political relevance of the categories of gender/sex, race, class or age in highlighting the ordering of our society into structures of oppressive power dynamics. However, it seeks a theoretical means through which to consider these categories more holistically in better understanding the lived experiences of women. Therefore, the conceptualisation of the lived body by feminist scholars is seminal to the purposes of this research because it aims to explore critiques of gender as expressed in the new conceptual category of the lived body (Moi 1999) in order to contribute to existing debates in prisons research regarding subjectivity and identity (Bosworth 1999; Carlen 1983; Eaton 1993). Through the theoretical relevance of lived experience this research provides a



feminist critique of punishment that, while acknowledging the gendered dimension of imprisonment, also seeks to go beyond it. This is done by connecting such feminist theories with a wider phenomenological methodology which aims to express women's perception of the prison through their embodied, lived- experiences of it (Merleau-Ponty 1962; see Chapters 2 and 4).

The following section now turns to look at psychoanalytic interpretations of the body as presented through the works of mainly continental feminist scholars. Although this study touches upon the relevance of a psychoanalytic account of the lived body only very briefly and tentatively, the following section aims to draw out some key themes that inform and *add* to the relevance of a phenomenologically *material* understanding of lived experience.

### **3.2 Psychoanalysis and feminism: The ego, body and its image**

Since the discipline's inception, psychoanalysis has recognized the importance of the body in theorising the interaction between the physical, the psychological and social dimensions of self-identity. It has been observed that the psychoanalytic tradition follows a theoretical continuum in regards to the body (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 94). This continuum starts from Freud's (1923 [1984]) account of the interaction between the biological, the psychological and socio-cultural in the making of the bodily ego. This is then expanded in Lacan's (1977) account of imaginary anatomy and the interaction between body and language, and then supplemented with Schilder's (1950) analysis of body-image and Merleau-Ponty's (1962) theorisation of the lived body. All these perspectives are interlinked and create a theoretical continuum in which they share a common interest in the 'libidinal body' and the outcomes of bodily desire.

Freud suggests that the psychological and the physical depend on each other and operate together in a way that each implies the other. He shows that the ego relies on a 'psychical map' of the libidinal body and is 'ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly those derived from the surface of the body' (Freud 1923 [1984]: 364fn). Freud's view of the interaction between body and mind is most evident in his analysis of the relation between instinct and drive. Instinct, being the reflection of biological aspects of human nature, is transformed, according to Freud, by drive. Drive is explained as the combination of both biological instinct and psychological motivation, resulting in the biological body being reconstituted by desire (Freud 1984). This reflects an implicit view of the body in

Freud's theory that suggests both the interaction between the mental and the physical as well as the impact of the social and cultural in the re-inscription of the body (Grosz 1994). +-

Expanding this socio-cultural dimension, Lacan (1977) argues that language is what gives the biological body its symbolic meaning. He suggests that without language, there is no body, as a real, material entity and he underlines the impact of socio-cultural factors in our interpretation of what bodies are and do. He differentiates between three distinct spheres of experience: first, what we call the 'real', but which, Lacan argues, is unknown to us because it cannot be explained by language. Second, and for Lacan the most important, is the symbolic element of being, which is what gives language, discourse and culture their significance in the interpretation of experience. And third, the imaginary sphere which consists of images developed prior to language, in the child's mirror stage, and which constitute experience in a mainly visual logic that can only be expressed once the child acquires access to the symbolic sphere through language (1977: 3-5). This implies that the imaginary realm is succeeded by the symbolic in a process where the child accepts the influence of culture on her own self-image. Lacan explains that 'imaginary anatomy' or one's idea of herself as body belongs to the sphere of the symbolic experience of being, which is given its meaning and image through culture and discourse (1977: 33). The primacy of the symbolic realm of experience has been influential for feminist theorising on sexual identity, as it challenges the essentialist position that biological diversity and anatomy are responsible for ascribed difference between man and woman (Grosz 1994).

For example, Irigaray (1985a) adopts much of her inspiration from Freud and Lacan, but provides a critique of the masculinist perspective of psychoanalysis. In psychoanalytic thought the male perspective is presented as the norm and sexual difference is recognized only to ascribe the category of woman with socially induced assumptions about motherhood and femininity. While providing a sustained critique of the psychoanalytic discipline, Irigaray does not reject its relevance to feminist scholarship. Rather, she argues that female morphology, and the female body's sexual differences from the male body, contribute to the production of feminine thought and behaviour. In so doing, she suggests that feminist scholarship should seek to voice women's thought processes by reflecting female embodiment and challenging the universality of masculinist, rational thought. A phenomenological account of women's lived experiences of imprisonment shares a similar aim, to observe the changing and non-generalisable narratives of women's punishment. According to Irigaray, women's point of view would highlight the ambiguity and perplexity of their bodily being and the relationship that Irigaray draws between embodiment and

thought stems from her Lacanian position that the materiality of the body does not exist outside of its symbolic, cultural constitution. Therefore – and contrary to some critiques of Irigaray for pertaining to biological essentialism (Butler 1990) – her insistence that corporeality can explain discourse and thought stems from her position that certain anatomical features determine sexual difference in thought and action.

Although feminist engagement with psychoanalytic concepts has caused considerable controversy within feminist scholarship (Butler 1993), it is clear that Irigaray's work for example, can provide a valuable account that traces the relationship between the material and the symbolic, the biological and the cultural. Though not without its own problems, this account is relevant for the purposes of this thesis insofar as it allows a conceptual dwelling into women prisoners' lived experiences as embodied but also as culturally specified into gendered and punitive events that come to inform women's identities, past experiences and traumas as gendered beings.

### ***Subjectivity and abject***

Another feminist theorist whose work takes inspiration from psychoanalysis is Julia Kristeva, who discusses the relationship between the maternal body, the semiotic and "abject". She suggests, that the maternal body and its relation to its newborn can fundamentally challenge the symbolic meanings attached to one's bodily being and subjectivity. While Kristeva accepts Lacan's definition of the symbolic as shared social meanings conditioned by language, she suggests that communication has another dimension, which she calls the semiotic dimension and this derives from the body and exists prior to language. The semiotic is conditioned in the newborn's relationship to the mother and occurs in the interconnection between the two. It is eventually repressed to give way to the symbolic dimension of being which relies on a sense of separation and self-identification. The idea that there is a pre-discursive corporeality to the maternal body and that this is significant in the production of subjectivity and perception has generated some criticism for implying that maternal instinct exists outside social and cultural influences and for suggesting maternal instinct is so fundamental that it can challenge cultural inscriptions on identity (Butler 1990: 88).

But Kristeva further explains the significance of the maternal body with reference to the concept of "*abject*". Abject refers to a response of disgust and withdrawal from experiences which challenge one's sense of bodily boundaries, one's bodily position or bodily rules in such a way, that they 'disturb identity' (Kristeva 1982:4). The emotional

reactions that abject receives originate, according to Kristeva, in the pre-symbolic dimension and are determined by the relation established between the maternal body and the newborn.

In the semiotic stage, the newborn has no sense of self as separate from her mother and entry into the symbolic dimension implies a process of separation between the two bodies where the baby starts to push away features not confined within her own skin; this takes place through a process of abjection. This argument suggests that identity is not formed entirely on the symbolic, discursive level, but it is primarily constituted on a bodily level. This is a significant point in support of this thesis's focus on embodied identities in prison.

Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separated me from the mother and father who proffer it. 'I' want none of that element, sign of their desire; 'I' do not want to listen... 'I' expel it...but since food is not an 'other' of 'me', who am only in their desire, I expel myself I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself. (Kristeva 1982: 3)

Oliver (1993) expands this point to suggest that the relation between the maternal body and the newborn, as the origin of subjectivity, is not constituted in a necessarily violent separation; instead, subjectivity occurs in a process of inter-dependence. Moreover, Ahmed (2000) expands Kristeva's analysis on abject onto an analysis of the *social process of abjection* whereby abject bodies contribute to the making of categories of exclusion and classification by challenging established norms, subjectivities and bodily borders. Challenging the idea that strangers are those we do not recognize because of their difference, Sara Ahmed suggests that the category of the stranger is constituted in a process of social abjection whereby the stranger, is somebody we already know. She implies that the stranger does not exist independent from our sense of self and cannot be simply considered as an object of knowledge against which we establish our own agency. She explains that 'we can only avoid stranger fetishism... by examining the social relationships that are concealed by this very fetishism...[W]e need to consider how the stranger is an effect of processes of inclusion and exclusion' (Ahmed 2000:6). She suggests that abject is a subjectivity established through stigmatisation and thus, it is not established solely on an internal, cognitive level but it is formed through 'the complex sliding of signifiers and bodies' (2000: 51).

Drawing on abjection as a means of building identity and interactions, the following section turns to the concept of body-image, which caricatures more precisely the interaction between the material, social and psychical. It arguably touches upon a relevant topic for

women prisoners' own self and bodily perceptions and captures a different angle of how their painful prison experiences can affect their subjectivities.

### ***Body-image***

Although the concept of body-image has always figured in psychoanalysis as a 'third term' interlinking mind and body (Grosz 1994), it was first Schilder (1950) that discussed the concept in detail, defining the physiological, psychological and social influences that constitute 'body-image'. According to Schilder body-image is:

the picture of our own body that we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves. These are sensations given to us [...] Beyond that, there is the immediate experience that there is unity in the body. This unity is perceived, yet it is more than a perception. We call it a schema of our body or bodily schema or[...] a postural model of the body. The body schema is the tri-dimensional image everybody has about himself [*sic*]. We may call it 'body-image'. The term indicates that we are not dealing with a mere sensation or imagination. There is a self-appearance of the body. It indicates also that, although it has come through the senses, it is not mere perception. There are mental pictures and representations involved in it but it is not mere representation. (Schilder 1950: 11)

Body-image takes on its specific form and impact upon the individual through the body's varying libidinal intensities, and the different meanings the individual gives to different parts of her body, along with her interpretation of her bodily borders with the world beyond. Body-image exists in a *relational framework* between the individual's own body and the space it occupies within the social world. Moreover, the image of one's own body is heavily influenced from social images of what bodies are and ought to be, along with social ideals about specific body types, and rules about the image and function of bodies. Central to the development of body-image therefore, are *emotions* and their diverse impact on the individual.

Body-image has also received considerable attention from contemporary psychological research where standardised measures tend to focus on women and draw large samples of data on their self-images. While some psychologists predicted that age would be a significant correlate to the levels of body dissatisfaction among women, many recent studies find that the most significant correlate to body-image is ethnicity (Cash and Henry 1995; Altabe 1998; Redmond 2003; Featherstone 2010). With a sample of 803 women in the US, Cash and Henry (1995) found that almost half of the participants reported negative evaluations of their physical appearance and were concerned with their weight. However, the researchers found that women from African-American backgrounds had a more positive body-image than Caucasian participants. Expanding the research on the relationship between different ethnic-cultural groups and body-image, Altabe (1998) found that 'Caucasian and

Hispanic-Americans showed more weight-related body-image disturbance than African-American and Asian-Americans' (1998: 153). Such findings, therefore, highlight the significance of socio-cultural influences in the construction of women's body-image.

Moreover, and as Goffman (1959) also mentions, various accessories or props, act as important tools in representing one's identity to the world, but these are also essential in the production and continuous change of one's body-image. Arguably an understanding of body-image as the interaction of psyche, physiology and society can help to explain the transformation of identity and self-perception through bodily *change* in prison (see Chapters 5 and 6). Therefore, it is argued here that understanding body-image in the prison context is pertinent to an analysis of the effects of imprisonment on women. More specifically, the thesis shows that understanding women's changing bodily images during and after imprisonment would help to establish the impact the prison has on the prisoner's self-perception and representation (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Feminist theory has considered the concept of body-image largely because it helps explain that the creation of subjectivity, which is reliant on one's body-image, is not constituted on a purely cognitive and asocial level. It is socially 'sexed, raced, (dis)abled, culturally and nationally positioned' (Lennon 2010: 23). Feminists therefore highlight that body-image and self-perception are constituted through an interaction between our particular social circumstances and the emotions we attach to these. They suggest that the concept of body-image enables us to trace the significant relationship between lived bodies and emotions (Lennon 2010). Gatens (1996) makes an important argument for this thesis which she derives from Spinoza's work on affect, in which he argues that affects cannot be controlled or changed through cognitive, rational knowledge. Gatens suggests that women's image of themselves will change only if we offer them a schema from which to see themselves differently, not only on a cognitive level, but from an emotional, embodied perspective. She argues that alternative conceptions of womanhood have to make affective sense. Similarly, this thesis aims to contribute towards an affective sociology of imprisonment that can emotionally change images of the prison experience and offer alternative images of the identities of women who experience imprisonment. Endorsing such affective change comes from a feminist perspective that could allow women prisoners themselves an alternative, non-stigmatising or self-oppressive, perspective on their lives.

Feminist theorists of the body, working with the notion of the bodily imaginary, therefore, see creative acts directed at alternations in our mode of perceiving bodies as central to the process of political and social transformation. (Lennon 2010: 24)

As I suggest in Chapters 5 and 6, the experience of the prison contributes towards significant physiological changes to women's bodies. Such changes, however, are not followed by an emotionally creative alternative that allows women to embrace new, more positive body and self-images. On the contrary, such change falls within prescribed social imaginaries that exacerbate the social exclusion of the women still further. It could therefore be concluded that for many women the experience of imprisonment offers an opportunity for bodily change which is not emotionally sustainable and which results in a deeply damaged body-image and scarred subjectivity.

In conclusion, feminist engagement with psychoanalysis highlights the significant relation between bodies, identities and society and serves to emphasize the socially inscribed process of self-identification and perception. Psychoanalytic influences in feminist theory highlight the complex relation between materiality and culture and have expanded ideas of subjectivity and self-perception beyond discursive categories. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 touch on the relevance of this perspective with regards to understanding the wider impact of women prisoners' negative body-image and self-stigmatisation.

### **3.3 Sexual difference, discourse and performing gender**

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979:16) captured the complex relation between body and punishment and suggested that the punishment of the "soul" in industrial, modern societies was achieved through the regulation of bodies in space. Modernity, then, in Foucauldian terms, is a process of regulatory technologies directed at the objectification of the body. In this analysis therefore, the body attains a significant role in the management and negotiation of *power relations* (Bartky 1990). As Foucault explains his intention in studying the historical change in methods of punishment stems from his objective to present us with the common history of power relations and object relations<sup>33</sup>.

Similarly, in his three volumes on the history of sexuality, Foucault sets out to investigate the relationship between repression, power and desire with the intention to critically engage with the 'discursive fact' of sex (Foucault 1981b: 11). He offers one of the first and most elaborate attempts to deconstruct bodily identity, accounting for how it is formed, regulated, changed and monitored by social structures, discursive regimes and power relations. In other words, the biological body attains meaning and function through culture and discourse. He explains that in practising self-discipline, the reflexive body

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<sup>33</sup> Feminist scholars developed a thorough critique of Foucault's gender-blind theoretical accounts on power relations, but have also largely drawn inspiration from his work (see Snider 2003; Howe 1994).

accepts and re-creates social structures. Drawing on a Foucauldian perspective, Bartky (2008) offers diet as an example of self-surveillance as it is practised by contemporary women:

Today, massiveness, power or abundance in a woman's body is met with distaste. The current body of fashion is taut, small-breasted; narrow-hipped ... Since ordinary women have normally quite different dimensions, they must of course diet ... dieting disciplines the body's hungers: appetite must be monitored at all times and governed by an iron will ... the body becomes one's enemy, an alien being bent on thwarting the disciplinary project. (Bartky 2008: 22)

Although valuable and particularly inspirational for feminist theory, Foucault's account deflects attention away from *agency* and consequently disregards partly the experience of subjectivity, particularly in its gendered form. Feminist accounts of Foucault arguably improve this perspective, by not only pointing to the body's gendered construction, but by also highlighting its active capacity to generate meaning and resist discursive power.

### ***The discursive body in feminist theory***

Even in its earlier manifestation, feminist scholarship challenged the idea derived from dominant discursive structures that self-discipline and regulation should form the basis of social norms (see Bordo 2003). Feminist scholarship in the 1990s in particular, turned its attention to the nature of power relations derived from such discursive and disciplinary practices and used the work of Foucault to explain the oppression of women in modern societies. In her attempt to widen the feminist debate on static discussions of "woman" and "identity", challenging the universality of the concept of "woman", Judith Butler, considers the more defuse ways through which subjectivity is created. In *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990), she argues that gender is the product of several stylized acts; 'a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance' (1990:33). She explains that the appearance of an unchanging naturally sexed bodily identity is merely the social product of "performative" acts. In her book *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993) takes the attention from gender and puts it onto sex. She explains that "sex" is the discursive symbol of the materiality of the body and its meaning is derived from socially constructed perceptions of gendered bodies. The materiality of sex includes regulatory orders which force subjects to take upon acts which support and maintain the heterosexual imperative and patriarchy.

It could be deduced that post-structuralist theorists such as Butler have challenged conventional sociological thinking and ideologies that viewed social structures and power relations at the expense of the physical dimensions of social control. This, however, comes with some important theoretical implications:



[...] these constructionist theories are based on a methodological objectivism that overlooks human experience and agency. They also replace biological essentialism with a social reductionism which collapses the body into society. The body remains a recipient of social practices, a location for the social system, and disappears as a 'vital organism which is experienced subjectively'...social constructionism tends to eclipse the body's significance as a source of the social world. (Shilling 2005b: 52)

Thus, although Butler claims to consider materiality, her work faces similar limitations to the perspective adopted by Foucault. Arguably, she neglects to conceptualize the body as a lived phenomenon, one that interacts with both its nature and its culture (Shilling 2005b:51; Grosz 2005) and which cannot be fully reduced to its social and cultural inscription. This has implications for her approach to subjectivity, a central issue in feminist theory, as well as an important element in studies of imprisonment (Bosworth 1999). Like Foucault, she uses the body to start an analysis of the dynamics of power in society, but ends this by prioritising the study of discourse over the possibility of embodied reflexivity (Crossley 2006). It is an approach that tends to return to a Cartesian dichotomy and hierarchy where the qualities of the mind override the potential of the active body<sup>34</sup>.

Unlike Butler, Grosz (1994) argues that although sexual difference cannot determine or explain lived experience, it is nevertheless necessary to acknowledge the material and corporeal links between all women, regardless of ethnicity or class. She therefore suggests that sexual difference and the symbolic otherness this attributes, is a common feature among all women and therefore important in the constitution of the "woman" category and the self-identities of all women. This position suggests that identity is built first through bodily and sexual differentiation and then from any other structural or discursive categories. Grosz focuses the primacy of sexual differentiation as a key determinant of identity in bodily reproductive capacities, which she suggests are a necessary condition upon which women's subjectivity and experience is built. Grosz criticises Butler's inattention to the materiality of bodies and suggests that the body should be understood as a process of active becoming (Grosz 2005). Therefore, the natural capacities of the body not only prescribe the body's discursive conceptualisation but are also relevant in understanding processes of self-transformation and change. This is an interesting perspective from which to explore the cultural and structural impact of imprisonment on women, observing their bodily transformations that occur not only as a result of their confinement, but also as a result of their biological precondition (e.g. see the experience of ageing in Chapter 5). Such interlinking of the biological and cultural dimensions of the body could help explain

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<sup>34</sup> It should be said that this perspective on knowledge is not entirely unique to discursive accounts. Even Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenologist, admits to have partially retained a philosophy of 'consciousness' (1968:183) when writing about the lived body as the basis of perception and relations in the world. Thus, such dualisms remain central in defining our perception of the body.

women's bodily control and punishment as prisoners, as well as their reactions, resistance and negotiation of embodied self during and after imprisonment.

This chapter has considered three main accounts on the body stemming from different perspectives within the feminist tradition. First, a review of phenomenological accounts on the lived body positioned the theoretical foundations of the main argument and central concepts used in this thesis. Reviewing the works of de Beauvoir and Iris Marion Young, Sandra-Lee Bartky and Toril Moi, the thesis clarifies its call for an experientially grounded understanding of lived experience in prison that stems from key to feminist scholarship concepts, such as object/subject, lived body and sex/gender. Second, a psychoanalytic review of concepts associated with the relationship between lived body and subjectivity added another important layer to this study, particularly by inquiring into the material and symbolic development of subjectivity and identity as an *abjection* taking place on the level of the skin and of social relations (Kristeva 1982; Ahmed 2000). Moreover, this discussion allowed for the consideration of body-image, a central theme in understanding the effects of imprisonment on women's self perceptions and changing bodies. Finally, this feminist review on the body turned to post-structuralist accounts which emphasize the body's social position and cultural inscription, and highlight its potential to both resist, and be a profound source of, oppression for women.

Arguably, these accounts can offer different degrees of utility for the central concepts of this thesis, but considering them together provides an additional means of justifying the theoretical relevance of this project. Some of the concepts drawn in the phenomenological feminist review can be traced directly in the central argument of the thesis; specifically, the embodiment of everyday life and the relevance of the lived body in understanding the contours of modern punishment as experienced by women. Some other concepts however, are developed here because they can be traced more particularly to the accounts of the participants of this study, whose perspectives are outlined in the latter part of the thesis. Having outlined the key theoretical perspectives and feminist debates relevant to this project, the second part of the chapter goes on to consider specific themes discussed in feminist research that are deemed also relevant in discussing the accounts of the participants informing this study.

## **PART II**

### **3.4 The 'look' of the body: Feminist contributions in understanding the politics of appearance**

#### ***Consumerism and commodity aesthetics***

The ability to consume has become aligned with the late-modern individual's capacity to perform identity and *be* an individual. Consumer culture uses images of the 'good life' or 'comfortable and desirable lifestyles' to replace the realities of everyday life and to promote a culture of constant flexibility and fluidity that promotes a relentless desire to pursue the new (Featherstone 1991). The 'project of the self' (Shilling 2003; 2008), therefore, is based on the ability to own desired goods and the ability to acquire lifestyles constructed by changing consumer cultures. Images of youth, beauty and health have become the ideals that women ought to pursue, and these ideals are materialised through the body and used to determine an individual's social status. As Featherstone (1991) claims, the more successful an individual is in replicating these idealised images, the higher 'its exchange value' (1991: 177). The manipulative power of consumer culture lies precisely in its proposal of unattainable ideals so that it can constantly offer the individual new commodities and new chances towards achieving her goals. In this process, the body attains the function of a 'fetishised commodity' which must be constantly presentable, 'marketed' and 'sold' (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 73).

Indeed, Baudrillard (1998) refers to the body as an *investment*. He argues that consumer culture characteristically develops a homology between bodies and commodity objects, where even though the body constitutes the most valuable consumer object, it is still an object in need of deliverance. Baudrillard argues that the 'cult of the soul' dominant in the eighteenth century has now been replaced by the 'cult of the body' (1998: 282). According to this, the body within consumerist society does not constitute a material entity but, much like the soul, functions *as an idea*, an abstract entity that acts as a functional object.

However, the increasing influence of self-reflexivity and the potential risks in our society demand that individuals practise regular self-control and actively review and reconstruct their bodies by making choices that enable opportunities through self-disciplining (Giddens 1991). The "look" of the body from the outside and concern with its inner health become entangled in such a way, that the well-presented body has itself become a symbol of the "correct attitude" or the "healthy lifestyle". Indeed, the incessant need to

appear a certain way is now translated as a symbol of “caring” for one’s own body, acting as a symbol of autonomy and self-respect, accompanied by other moral values such as the display of “willpower”, energy and the power to act independently (Bordo 1990: 94-5). Such ideas have also been entangled in the politics of penal power and can be observed in various treatments and consumer opportunities available to women in prisons (Hannah-Moffat 2004; see Chapter 6).

### ***Feminist perspectives on the politicisation of appearance***

The appearance of gender invokes certain regulatory practices from the self, and renders the surface of the body a central element of “doing gender”. This is particularly evident in pressures to adhere to inscribed “looks” and body sizes. Therefore, the relationship between body and femininity has been approached as central in understanding women’s embodied identities. As Urla and Swedlund (1995) argue, this relation aims to tackle the ‘conundrum of somatic femininity’ or the popular idea that feminine bodies are never feminine enough:

[Feminine bodies] must be deliberately and oftentimes painfully remade to be what ‘nature’ intended - a condition dramatically accentuated under consumer capitalism - that motivates us to focus our inquiry into deviant bodies on images of the feminine ideal [...] Body ideals in twentieth century ...are influenced and shaped by images from classical or ‘high’ art, the discourses of science and medicine, and increasingly via a multitude of commercial interests, ranging from mundane life insurance standards to the more high profile fashion, fitness, and entertainment industries. (Urla and Swedlund 1995: 277-8)

Thus, the (disempowered) disciplined female body is a body of conformity to social order; it is easily transformed into a “docile” body without a political agency that can be moulded according to the needs of the market and the politico-economic conditions of society.

The example of the “fat” female body and its (negative) social perception reflect the commodification of female appearance. Reflecting a new morality of femininity, the pressure for women to be thin in late-modernity has been one of feminist theory’s most consistent preoccupations (Bordo 1990; 1996; 1999a; Bartky 2008; Wolf 1990). Diamond (1985) argues that images of slenderness have a significant impact on the bodies of contemporary women, and arguably also on their identities. Responding to Orbach’s (1981) influential book *Fat is a Feminist Issue*,<sup>35</sup> Diamond argues that fatness does not constitute a medical symptom: instead, it is a social construct whose image is not fixed and whose meanings are prone to change across time and place. As a social construct, fat exists in

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<sup>35</sup>This book ends by implying that fatness, which is discussed as a medical and psychoanalytic symptom, is in itself an issue to which weight loss is the answer.

*relation* to thin, and in their interaction, both are affected by different socio-cultural images of femininity. Diamond argues that we ought to consider the social meanings behind the concepts of “fat”, “thin” and “healthy”, and to appreciate their impact on women’s experience of their bodies, their body-image and self-esteem. These complex conceptualisations are central in interpreting the empirical data of this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6).

Thus, it is crucial to understand the different categories in which bodies are placed and the “knowledge” that each body type can derive. As Murray (2007) puts it, ‘we manage our identities through perception - we believe we can come to *know* the essence of a person through the way they appear to us’ (2007: 363 emphasis in the original). For this reason, it is imperative to deconstruct the meanings attached to such appearance “knowledges” and which could explain the constitution of the pathological and normal body binary. In line with this argument, Murray claims that:

[...] the same kinds of tacit body knowledge are in our readings of ‘fat’ bodies (particularly fat women) [...] I would suggest that normative thinness constitutes the ‘universally feminine’. It is useful to think about a normative ‘slender’ body as not only occupying a space of power and influence, but as a means of projecting onto our perception a kind of ‘backdrop’ of normalcy that structures our readings/constructions of certain bodies as normative or aberrant. (Murray 2007: 364)

Similarly, the perception of fatness as not only ugly and abnormal but also pathological and clinically unhealthy, derives from the tacit body knowledges prevalent in the medical profession (Rich and Evans 2005). In this sense, studying the effects of imprisonment on female bodies is also an investigation into the ways in which these bodies are constituted as pathological, criminal, ill and “unsavable” (Hannah-Moffat 2005; 2010).

### ***‘Doing health’: the neo-liberal health model and the gendered body***

Feminist critiques of medical practices have traditionally centred their criticisms on the power of medical experts to inscribe women’s bodies with feminine values. Other critiques of medical discourse are based on medicine’s empirical observation method, which assumes objectivity in its findings. Murray (2007:361; see also Illich 1986) argues that empirical observation is ‘latent with cultural meanings’ which aim to classify ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ bodies based on cultural measures of ‘sameness’ that adhere to normalising values<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> In the context of women’s imprisonment, this argument holds truth not only in regard to the medical treatment offered to prisoners, but also in regard to women’s overall conceptualisation as “mad”, “sad” or “sick” in varying stages of penal policy and practice (Carlen 1998).

Medical sociologists have observed the emergence of a “new paradigm” of health in recent years which focuses on the need to *prevent* disease rather than merely treat it (Nettleton 1996). This new preventive model has moved away from the biomedical paradigm of the past and has introduced a new paradigm referred to as the “psycho-social-epidemiological model”, which focuses on health promotion, risk, prevention and aspects of consumerism (Nettleton 1996; Moore 2010). Feminist critiques of the “new paradigm” of health and the ‘new morality of health’ (Moore 2010: 95) indicate that it has a gendered character and produces an understanding of the female body as one that contains strong attributes of “femininity” that need to be contained. Moore (2010) argues that such a gendered attitude towards definitions of health and its promotion can have negative effects on women. The body under this new paradigm holds a paradoxical function: on the one hand, it is presented as out of control, at risk and uncertain in its capacities and function; and on the other, it is suggested that the body ought to be controlled and regulated in order to prevent future illness.

The attitude of self-control that the new paradigm of health tries to promote fits with the neo-liberal model of atomisation and self-regulation, pertinent to our late-modern societies, and has been associated with a wider sense of insecurity and uncertainty (Giddens 1991; Bauman 1991). This is most evident in the example of the prison that denies prisoners their autonomy and bodily integrity, yet promotes a model of health-care that demands prisoners to exercise individual responsibility and self-control (Smith 2000). This model of contradictions and gendered thinking is particularly dangerous when we consider that the body is strongly associated with individuals’ self-constructions and identities. For example, in an empirical study, Saltonstall (1993:7) concludes that health is grounded in a ‘sense of self and a sense of body’ which are connected to the participants’ biographies. Saltonstall (1993) argues that the interplay between the individual’s ‘health, self, body and gender’ is implicated in the development of a healthy body politic in society.

The significance of social factors in experiences of embodiment and health becomes clearer when we look at *food and eating practices*. Delormier et al. (2009) criticise common medical practices that encourage obesity prevention through a change in individual eating behaviours and ascribe obesity to personal choice. Sociologists have shown that eating practices can be explained through social relations and patterns particular to different socio-cultural contexts that influence personal choices and *feelings* about eating. Undertaking thus a ‘population perspective’, Delormier et al. (2009) argue that a society’s collective character

and values have an impact on individual behaviour and decision-making in regard to practising health and eating. This thesis considers eating in prison as a central aspect of the experience of imprisonment and the emotions associated with it (see Chapter 7).

### ***The “gaze”, gender and the dressed body***

The film theorist Mulvey (1975) first introduced the now widely used concept of the “male gaze” to argue that western cinema has always reflected a masculinist bias representing women as passive objects. She argues that these representations are meant to provide male audiences with a voyeuristic satisfaction and an ego boost where the image of women as objectified ‘spectacles’ satisfies their ‘controlling male gaze’ (1975: 27, 33). This gendered spectatorship, however, was further conceptualised by other feminists, who argue that such a gaze can be adopted by *both* men and women, emphasising the pervasive nature of power relations upon which gender is founded (Tseëlon 1995). These authors suggest that women are socialised to internalise the “male gaze” and to identify as sexual objects of men’s desire. As part of this process, women are encouraged to ‘monitor their physical selves for deviations from cultural ideals for a feminine appearance’ (Tyner and Ogle 2008: 106). Through these internalised procedures, women significantly contribute to, and often encourage, their own commodification. For example, Bordo (2003:173) writes about ‘the shame that another pair of eyes can bring’ and suggests that modern women’s socialisation entails a process where they ‘anticipate, even play to the [male] sexualising gaze, trying to become what will please, captivate, turn shame into pride’ (2003: 173). In the context of the prison, this negotiation of selfhood and public appearance may go beyond the domain of the “male gaze” and the pressure to adhere to “feminine ideals”. Similar, yet conceptually distinct, gazes from women prisoners and staff, affect self-presentation and reflexivity in prisons (Rowe 2011; see Chapter 6). Likewise, the concept of the “gaze” is central in considering experiences of stigmatised bodies (Goffman 1968; see Chapters 6 and 7). Such bodies may include obese, ageing, inappropriately dressed or deviant bodies marked by addiction or self-injury. Here the concept of the “gaze” could also help explain how such stigmatised individuals have learned to expect and deal with a different gaze than the voyeuristic, sexual male gaze suggested in some feminist literature (see Chapters 6 and 7).

In the process of body disciplining and thus the internalisation of the “gaze”, commentators argued that women can paradoxically feel empowered. The idea of empowerment through conformity has been challenged by theorists who argue that power based on beauty (Woolf 1991), is problematic because its acquisition relies on others’ (usually men’s) reactions to a woman’s physical appearance and level of conformity (Bordo 20003; Freedman 1986). In line with this argument, feminist authors refer to the ‘coercive

aspects of beauty' (Tyner and Ogle: 109). Bartky (1988[1997]) and Bordo (2003) argue that although popular culture promotes beauty projects as a way for women to express their individuality and empower themselves, the promotion of these particular aesthetics are in fact 'highly stylised activities that [give] little rein to self expression' (Bordo 2003: 70). Similarly, suggestions that women in prison use their 'femininity' to resist imprisonment (Bosworth 1999:7-8), can neglect the conditioned circumstances in which this takes place and can overlook the oppressive underpinnings of such compromised forms of resistance that are necessary for a sustained critique of women's punishment.

#### *Bodily resistance or ambivalent identities?*

Having said this, Bordo (2003) further argues that resistance and transformation are fluid and flexible concepts that are 'continual and creative, and subversive responses are possible under even the most oppressive circumstances' (2003: 295). Feminist theorists of women's appearance have considered ways in which women may transform their physical representation as forms of resistance to the ideals of femininity and heterosexuality. For instance, Russo (1997), influenced by the works of Douglas (1990) and Bakhtin (1984), looks at the resistive tendencies of "grotesque" female bodies which defy norms of thinness or youthfulness and argues that these women's images may be 'used affirmatively to destabilize idealisation of female beauty' (Russo 1997: 327). Also, bell hooks (1990) and Collins (1990) argue that instead of viewing sites of marginalisation as oppressive, margins can be chosen by actors as sites of resistance. They use the example of African-American women who use their "otherness" as imaginative forms of resistance (hooks 1990) to re-produce their appearance, gestures and dress in expressing their empowered difference. Such resistance is thus infused into mainstream representations of femininity (Tyner and Ogle 2008). It is therefore important to note that feminist theory has acknowledged the body's double nature in being both socially oppressed and acting as women's main means of resistance.

A more precise approach has been the "post-rational" (or more interactionist) approach which refrains from constituting "woman" merely as either a docile body or a free and empowered agent. Instead, it asserts that women act according to the demands of different circumstances and manage their attitudes through varying performances (Goffman 1959). This may also explain how consumers' buying choices may influence the meaning and values of feminine ideals. This context-specific approach reminds, as Bordo (2003) suggests, that the management of one's appearance does not rely only on free choice, but is instead constituted "under pressure". Nevertheless, the prospect of resistance through the



body comes with inevitable complications, ambivalence and insecurity which, particularly in the prison context, can derive more painful emotions than it can sustain satisfaction. As Weitz (2002) suggests, and as this thesis demonstrates, focusing the project of resistance on the body can be both gratifying and self-punitive.

### *Clothing as punishment*

Sociologists have studied clothing as a way of understanding the interaction between identity and appearance (Kaiser 1990; 1995). In this context, dress has been studied in micro-sociologies of everyday life as an expressive representation of one's identity. Tseëlon (2001) argues that gender is the most central aspect of identity articulated through clothes and explains that dress is used as the means with which to defuse the 'ugliness of reality' and to constitute individuality and identity *in relation to others* (2001: 104). As Foucault (1979) argued, the containment, institutionalisation and control of those deemed other (e.g. criminals, the mad or unruly) is what constitutes the insiders as 'insiders' or 'normal'. The insider and the other co-exist in a 'symbiotic relationship' (Tseëlon 2001: 105; see also Ahmed 2000) that represents each other's presentation and often self-perception. Empirical studies such as Holliday's (2001) visual methodology of women's dress, look at dress as the basis of self-making. In these narratives it appears that the concept of "comfort" is a key theme in respondents' choices of clothing and it is a key feature of gender identity and sexuality. Moreover, Eicher (2001) uses visual data from two very different cultural contexts (western Anglo-Americans and the Kalabari in Nigeria) to demonstrate how gender is based on the dressing of the flesh. Gender difference is deciphered in both cultural contexts through women exposing more flesh than men, particularly in public ceremonies. This alludes to cultural ideas of women being the 'corporeal', 'natural' and 'sensual' sex and men being ascribed the more 'rational' and 'spiritual' qualities of the mind (Grosz 1994; Bordo 1999b; 2003).

Unlike accounts of fashion as communication, expression and self-identity, clothing in the prison context has historically been associated with a "stripping of identity" and a mortification of the body (Goffman 1961). This is also illustrated in a thought-provoking history of prison clothing, where Ash (2010) depicts how clothing acts as punishment. She argues that prison dress was made to label prisoners as "criminals" and to deviate and exclude them from the outside world of fashion. This argument expands the idea that the body is punishment's main target (Howe 1994) and that it is used to visually represent social exclusion and punitiveness.

Ash (2010) investigates how the ‘perception and knowledge of “self” have been formed and concealed in prison garb’ (2010: 3). She comments on the invisibility of the prisoner’s dressed body as it stands in reality and criticises the mythological images of the “cool” criminal found in popular media displays. Her focus on prison dress is not limited to the use of uniforms across different penal establishments, but looks also at the regulations imposed, and limitations of non-uniformed prison dress. Although her argument is that clothing is a representation of punishment, Ash also acknowledges the power of dress to personify identities and small acts of resistance. She explains:

Clothes are used as signifiers of the power of the penal establishment to bodily punish miscreants. Prison dress is defined by the power of the political systems that dominate networks of criminal justice and stigmatise in order to reduce inmates to interchangeable identities. They are ‘othered’ in their culpability and excluded from society by clothing that regulates and incarnates the punishment of the wearer ... Penal institutions ... use dress strategically to diminish the imprisoned. Prison clothing takes many forms, whether in uniforms or in the neglect of the maintenance and distribution of clothing. Yet, while clothing is an embodiment of punishment, it cannot take away either personal histories or the small signs of resistance to institutional labelling. (Ash 2010: 3)

She suggests that the absence of research on prison clothing and its neglect by fashion theorists has occurred because prison dress is one of the few types of clothing that does *not* rely on popular design and the mandates of a consumerist economy. Prison clothing is not determined by its “fashionability”. It is standardised clothing which does not fall into the domain of “formalised” clothing, such as the uniforms of authority groups (2010: 5). However, because the prison relies on the “commodification” of identity, Ash also suggests that today, images of fashion and the social inequalities attached to them, penetrate the walls of the prison and attain significant meaning within prison culture (see Chapter 6). As shown in this thesis, prison clothing is central both to inmate interactions and to self-maintenance.

The punishment of women prisoners through clothing presents us with a feminist paradox. First, it speaks back to the deep oppression of women outside prison, highlighting their gendered repression and pressure to adhere to the unachievable ideals of consumer societies. Moreover, dress in prison presents women prisoners’ *double oppression*: they are oppressed outside prison, through consumer pressures; and they are additionally oppressed inside prison, through additional and often contradictory limitations and regulations on their presentation of self. This also adds to their false consciousness, disorientating them and stigmatising them not only as offenders but also as women. The thesis suggests that the pressures of appearance, gender performance and dress in the context of imprisonment can be seen under the notion of pained lived bodies, highlighting these anxieties as additional harms of imprisonment. These forms of oppression and the anxieties they cause can be

articulated under the paradigm of embodiment as pains to one's dignity and self-worth. They can, therefore, be studied in the context of the prison as illustrations of the interaction between the disciplinary and punitive technologies of the prison and those of the outside world. In other words, a study of subjectivity through the body can reveal women prisoners' double sense of imprisonment as constituted and felt through their bodies. As offenders their bodies are confined and punished inside a prison, but as women their bodies as subjectively perceived as prisons in themselves, actualising and identifying with their 'otherness' or sense of 'lack' (de Beauvoir 1949: 5) within and outside the confines of the physical prison.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of key theoretical ideas in feminist scholarship that engage with the study of bodies and women's self-perceptions and subjectivity. The first half of the chapter explored phenomenological, psychoanalytic and post-structuralist, perspectives pursued by feminists in order to analyse the body's relevance in understanding identity and the ordering of culture. All three make important contributions to the study of embodiment and women's lived experiences. However, this study aligns more closely with key conceptualisations found specifically in feminist phenomenology.

It appears that a central feature of debate in feminist theories of the body is the attempt to understand the role and relationship between biology and society, nature and culture, in determining selfhood. This conflict is particularly obvious in debates about sexual difference. It could be concluded that although feminist perspectives on the body vary – from those arguing that bodies attain meaning only in their discursive, culturally inscribed state (Butler 1990) to those who come close to biological essentialism in suggesting that gender is forged on the material level (Irigaray 1985b) – there is agreement that subjectivity is constituted by, or at least relies upon, the body which is active in performing both its social inscriptions and its material agency. This chapter suggested that a feminist criminological account of women's experience of imprisonment and their changing identities under the dynamics of penal power should incorporate a feminist appreciation of gendered bodily identity. It further argued that Moi's (1999) invitation to consider the *lived body*, instead of the flawed categories of sex/gender, may be also helpful to the study of subjectivity and lived experience in the context of imprisonment. It was suggested in this chapter that it is important to revisit the existential phenomenology of earlier feminist scholarship (e.g. de Beauvoir 1949) and to incorporate it into a more psychosocial investigation of life in prison. In doing so, feminists can develop renewed theoretical categories through which to study women's lived experiences and subjectivity. The lived-

body can be one such category, accounting for one's gendered, racialised, classed and otherwise culturally inscribed dimensions, as well as engaging with the material, narrative, emotional and even psychical dimensions of self-identity. It has been the intention of this chapter to draw out, from different feminist accounts, the possibility of developing a more *holistic* conceptual category through which to study subjectivity and identity in the penal context.

The second part of the chapter explored more concrete themes about gender, identity and embodiment and has suggested that the prisoner's body is highly relevant in understanding situated experiences of the prison, which can constitute significant, yet "unintentional" harm to prisoners' self-identities. The chapter looked at aspects of appearance in relation to identity, including the body's *size, weight and the medical stigmatisation of "fat" bodies*. The neo-liberal model of health was scrutinised to show how values of *self-control* and disciplining along with individual responsibility for the practice of "*healthy lifestyles*" are implicated in the contradictory notions of "*release*" and indulgence which render the practice of selfhood, health and self-esteem in consumer society a constant challenge.

Within the theoretical context of late-modern uncertainty towards the body and of distrust in the body's enactment of the self, the chapter also discussed the *ambivalence of appearance* in the making and unmaking of femininity in consumer societies. In particular, it looked at the role of *dress* in performing selfhood but also in communicating the self through interaction. Dress was contrasted between fashionable dress outside prison and *punitive dress* inside prison (Ash 2010).

The theoretical justifications provided in Chapters 2 and 3 argue for the inclusion of an embodied- experience paradigm in the study of imprisonment. The issues raised in these two chapters are contextualised and expanded in the empirical findings of this thesis. So far, the thesis has shown, on a theoretical level that the prisoner's body, as object, but also most importantly, as subject can be an invaluable source of knowledge about the pains and the emotions of punishment as well as the coping strategies and acts of resistance entailed in the embodied experience of self in prison. The following chapter considers the methodological process entailed in applying these ideas to the empirical study of embodiment in prison.

## Chapter 4

### Reflecting on the research process: Methods and methodology

Method shapes each theory's vision of social reality. It identifies a central problem, group and process, and creates as a consequence its distinctive conception of the political [...] Feminism, on this level, is the theory of women's point of view ... [But] Feminism does not appropriate an existing method – such as scientific method – [...] Women's experience of politics, of life, as sex object, gives rise to its own method of appropriating that reality: feminist method. (McKinnon 1982: 532-5)

The complexity of human subjectivity, we are sometimes told, is best left to poets, playwrights and novelists and is not the proper subject matter of scientists. Yet, how can a field of study lay claim to being a 'human science' if such an essential aspect of what it is to be human is somehow left out of our social enquiry. (Maruna and Matravers 2007: 429)

Reflexivity for its own sake can be dangerous.  
But reflexivity with an ethic seems to me to provide a way of  
tackling the emotional dimension of research  
honestly and with some purpose. (Liebling 1999: 165)

In this chapter I suggest that the methodology I employed connects my theoretical framework with the methods I used to conduct my empirical fieldwork and interpret the data I gathered. The reason that this study required an empirical component is because I am interested in the *experience* of imprisonment and its effects, thus a purely theoretical account would not sufficiently address my research objectives. Having said this, I rely on a case-study approach, working with the assumption that at 'its best, [this method can] provoke questions which go beyond the particular case to a theoretical consideration of wider issues' (Carlen 1983: 2). This chapter argues that the experience of imprisonment, like any other experience of the lived world, can be understood (in the *verstehen* sense of interpretive examination) mainly through empirical, qualitative research. To do this, however, the thesis is proposing a new methodological tool. It invites a theoretical and empirical engagement with the role, position and reflexivity of the body of the prisoner and ex-prisoner as a method of understanding experiences of imprisonment. Arguably imprisoned bodies are capable not only of drawing a more diverse and emotive picture of the prison space as a painful, harsh and inhumane environment (Bosworth et al. 2005), thus illustrating a more complete picture of the 'pains of imprisonment'; but they can also point to new directions in conceptualising prisoner identities as constituted within and outside the prison.

This chapter reflects upon the methods and interpretations I employed to design, collect and analyse my data. I demonstrate my own subjectivity and emotional involvement with the study and, as I illustrate, there were moments of intended intersubjectivity and embodied empathy between myself and the participants. However, there were also moments when my embodied awareness acted as evidence of the differences between researcher and

participant, emphasising the inevitable power dynamics engendered in conducting empirical research with vulnerable participants, as well as, highlighting the differences in our biographies, socio-economic and cultural narratives. For this reason, I admit and reflect upon my bias and subjectivity in this phenomenological exercise. The thesis pursues a feminist epistemological perspective and acknowledges the situational and subjective elements from which the interpretations and arguments are derived. It works with the particular experiences of a small sample of participants, giving them meaning within their own contexts without the pursuit of a generalised theory that represents all experiences as one. It should be noted, however, that although this chapter follows a standard structure, the research process was not so prescribed. The conduct of empirical research is a constant methodological challenge, undergoing several modifications and adjustments that inevitably affect the direction of the final product and contribute unavoidable limitations to the findings and their interpretation.

#### **4.1 Research Design**

##### ***Aims and Objectives***

As aforementioned the aim of the thesis is to examine the punishment-body relation in the context of women's embodied experiences of imprisonment (Howe 1994). Thus, even though the example of the prison serves to illustrate at its extreme the disciplinary regulation of women's bodies overall (Bordo 1990; 1996; 2003), the thesis focuses more on the specifics of women's punishment in the prison context (Carlen 1983; 1998; Howe 1994). Specifically, the thesis considers the 'pains of imprisonment' as reflected from and on women's bodies and illustrates some neglected harms of imprisonment as embodied on the *ex-prisoner*.

This primary objective of the thesis required an exploration of how women who experience imprisonment understand and conceptualise embodiment and how they have reflected on their bodies during and after prison. The research also considers how bodies cope with, react, resist and reflect upon the prison experience within the longer narrative of women's biographies. To this end, the thesis also aims to illustrate that the punishment-body relation starts and ends *outside* the prison, incorporating significant aspects of women's backgrounds and overall life experiences (see also Carlen 1998). It is argued that the embodiment paradigm can encompass the social control of women, their double oppression and their pained experiences, with reference to both the outside world and the prison. It is further suggested that understanding the corporeal identities of women prisoners involves a

study of subjectivity, or the ‘psychosocial’, as *both* social as well as biographical (Gadd and Jefferson 2007: 5).

The final intention of this research is to reflect upon the role emotions play in the experience of punishment. The thesis suggests that research on the lived experience of imprisonment should appreciate the relevance and significance of embodiment as a paradigm for the study of painful deprivations.

### ***Research Questions***

The main research question addressed by this thesis is: *How can an embodied-experience perspective elucidate our understanding of women’s experience of imprisonment?* Following on from this, I divided my study into three theoretical clusters of inquiry that help to answer this principal question:

1. The first cluster, inspired from a phenomenological reading of the theory, is concerned with the embodied lived experience of imprisonment. It asks: to what extent does awareness of embodiment add to our understanding of what it feels like to be in prison and how are the ‘pains of imprisonment’ perceived through the prisoner’s body?
2. With a social constructionist focus, the second cluster evaluates the impact of social structures and prison structure on the female body. It asks: how does the prison punish and change female bodies and how does it reconstruct bodily identity?
3. The third cluster aims to determine whether it is the imported prisoner characteristics (i.e. the prisoner’s experiences and personal attitudes *before* entering prison) or in-prison influences (the situationalist-functionalist model) that are more significant in shaping the prisoner’s coping and resistance in prison. It asks: how do prisoners interact with and appropriate the prison’s effects on their bodies based on their broader biographies? Would it be valid to draw a parallel between women prisoners’ experiences and the experiences of women outside prison? And, is it appropriate to study the social control of women and women’s punishment within the same paradigm.

The purpose of dividing my research interests into these clusters is to clarify the connection between my empirical investigation and the theories that have informed its direction. The aim, however, is not to test the validity of any one theoretical perspective. Instead, I evaluate their relevance in the context of prison experiences.

Inspiration for this study is derived from a previous ethnographic study I conducted at HMP Bronzefield as part of a postgraduate degree in 2008-9. In this study, embodiment was central to my observations<sup>37</sup>. From existing research but also from this previous empirical experience, the thesis embarked on its design and data collection with the assumption that there *is* an effect of punishment on the body and that women prisoners experience their imprisonment in an embodied manner (Frigon 2007; Plugge et al. 2006; Smith 2000; 2002; Carlen 1998; Bosworth 1999; Howe 1994).

### ***Planning and Data Collection***

The research adopts a reflexive research design which permitted a degree of freedom to employ different approaches to the research questions and helped to make connections between the data and the theory easier. My subjective role as a researcher was taken into account and I continually reflected on my role as an “outsider” in elucidating certain reactions from my research participants and the various individuals and organisations that put me in touch with them (see also Jewkes 2012a). The subjective feelings of the researcher when conducting research are both unavoidable and influential in shaping the collection and interpretation of data from the research setting. This is particularly the case when conducting research in the context of the prison, a setting that is highly emotional, unfamiliar and unnatural, but one that also transcends its own walls (Liebling 1999; Jefferson 2010). The design of this study is summarised in the following sections.

### ***Access***

Research for this thesis started with the intention to pursue ethnographic research in women’s closed prisons in England. After some amendments, I received ethical approval from the King’s College London Social Sciences Ethics Committee in March 2011. In the meantime, I prepared a National Offender Management Service (NOMS) application for access to conduct research with women in prison; I simultaneously sent letters to three governors requesting prison access. My plan was to dedicate a relatively extended period (6 months) attempting to gain access, as I was aware of the growing difficulties prison researchers face in this respect. After approximately 5 months, I was refused official prison access by NOMS for “security reasons”<sup>38</sup>. Two of the governors responded to my request to say that they could not help with prison access (i.e. advised the official application procedure). The third declined my request explaining that the spending cuts imposed on his

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<sup>37</sup> Note that this ethnographic study is not part of this thesis.

<sup>38</sup> These reasons were not specified, but the decline letter implied that this research would be of no benefit to NOMS and would place additional strain on prison security.



prison were already causing some resistance by prisoners and that the nature of my project and its focus on “sensitive issues” such as nutrition and self-injury, could cause ‘unrest among the women’. He mentioned, for example, that resistance was occurring in response to the prison’s decision to provide prisoners only with cold food during the day and concluded that the relevance of the project to the women could backfire to threaten prison security.

After about 8 months of continuous attempts to negotiate access in more indirect ways, including attempts to reach participants via contacts at Women In Prison (WIP), various probation officers associated with HMP New Hall and Holloway, and efforts to get prison access through a contact at HMP Styal, I realised that I had to redesign the study to involve participants who could be reached outside the prison. Consequently, I posted advertisements in the WIP magazine and *Inside Time* newspaper, but having limited time left, I simultaneously started contacting various organisations that are in touch with ex-prisoners. Taking into account the chaotic lifestyles of many ex-prisoners and the difficulty in reaching them directly, I relied on the support of these organisations as gatekeepers.

The organisations that assisted with access to my sample included: the Koestler Trust in London, the Together Women Project in Sheffield, Catch-22 in Sheffield, Streetreach in Doncaster, the Cyrenians in Newcastle, the Yorkshire Probation Trust and Blue Sky Skills for Work in Wakefield, Asha Women’s Centre in Worcester, Addaction in West Sussex and 2ndChance in London. I was in contact with several other NGOs and charities that assisted me in reaching the organisations that ultimately enabled my contact with the participants. This negotiating and networking process took approximately one month of telephone and email communication with various staff at these organisations who agreed to display a poster advertising my project and to ask their clients informally if they were interested in participating. Within this one month period I received calls from interested participants, or from staff at the centres providing me with the details of women potentially willing to participate.

The women I recruited comprise 24 ex-prisoners 5 of whom I visited in London and Crawley at the end of August 2011; followed by 8 interviews I conducted in Sheffield at the start of September and a further 7 interviews conducted in Doncaster and Wakefield. The last 4 interviews were conducted in Worcester at the end of September on two separate visits. The total data collection time in this first contact with the participants was approximately 11 days. In December 2011 I approached again all 24 participants and

managed to make contact with 13, who took part in a follow up interview<sup>39</sup>. These 13 participants were interviewed in a period of approximately 5 days during 5 separate visits in the aforementioned locations.

In addition to the interview sample, I was able to distribute in July 2011 a long answer questionnaire to 16 serving prisoners at HMP Bronzefield. These women participated in a related workshop that I had designed for WIP and the questionnaire was collected by my contact at WIP at the end of July 2011 (see pages 108-109).

### ***Methods and sample***

#### ***Empirical Part 1: Qualitative case study with a group of ex-prisoners***

The empirical component of the thesis is comprised of two sources of data: interviews with ex-prisoners (N= 24) and long-answer questionnaires with serving prisoners (N=16). Particularly for the interviews, a case study approach was deemed most appropriate because it allows for breadth and depth into life-narratives which allowed me to discuss at length aspects of the participants' embodied identities. The number of interview participants was limited to 24 to allow for more profound engagement, but also because after I conducted the first few interviews, the data reached a "saturation point" whereby new interviews did not yield additional information to the already emerged themes (Bachman and Schutt 2007: 282).

The case study method gave me the opportunity to engage in personal conversations, semi-structured interviews and brief observations of the everyday lives of my sample. As Gadd and Jefferson (2007: 7) explain, the case study method permits an evaluation of theoretical perspectives with the purpose of assisting in 'theory-building'. Moreover, this approach allowed a focus on the particularities of women's experiences, giving each participant an opportunity to draw out the emotional pains and embodied experience of the prison within a deeply personal research perspective. The follow-up interviews conducted with 13 of the 24 women grounded and dominated my focus, as inevitably I engaged with them in greater depth than with the rest of the sample.

The 24 women interviewed came from different backgrounds, were aged between 19 and 42 and 8 out of the 24 identified with an ethnic minority group (**Table 4**; see also

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<sup>39</sup> Appendix 1 summarises the timetabled process of empirical data design, access, collection and analysis. (The period of redesigning the study to engage with ex-prisoners instead of current prisoners is considered along with the appropriate travelling arrangements made during data collection).

Appendix 4 ). All had spent a prison sentence in closed prisons and some had also spent time in open prisons. Moreover, all of the participants had been released for six months or less (this was to gather a more homogeneous group). Although no other demographics were purposive in the sample, the participants shared many characteristics. For example, owing to my access being achieved through particular organisations, many participants had long histories of drug misuse and dependency. However, the participants' "profiles" were representative of the overall women's prison population: they were derived from socio-economically impoverished backgrounds and had suffered several physical and mental health issues including addictions and experiences of abuse. The participants' real names are not used in the thesis and the table below summarises their demographic details in the chronological order in which I conducted the interviews. The first set of interviews lasted on average 2 hours per participant. The 13 participants highlighted in grey on the table are those who agreed to meet me for a second time. The location of the interviews varied: the majority of the participants were interviewed in private rooms within the organizations which helped me make contact with the women, whereas other interviews took place in coffee shops or in the participants' homes.

**Table 4: Selected characteristics of the interview sample**

Participant	Age	Ethnic Background	Time since prison release <sup>40</sup>	Time in Prison <sup>41</sup>	Number of prison sentences	Experience of self-injury	Past abuse	Addiction
Anna	23	White British	2 weeks	9M <sup>42</sup>	2	no	yes	Heroin
Berta	35	White British	2 weeks	24M	8	yes	yes	Heroin
Carmen	19	Asian British	3 months	4W <sup>43</sup> (R) <sup>44</sup>	2	yes	yes	no
Denise	34	White British	1 month	3 M	1	yes	U <sup>45</sup>	Alcohol
Eve	37	Mixed	4 months	4 M	2	no	no	Heroin/ Cocaine
Fiona	29	White British	4 months	4 M	1	no	no	Heroin/ Cocaine
Gemma	26	White British	6 months	2 M	1	yes	yes	no
Hayley	37	Mixed	3 weeks	3 M	1	no	no	no
Iris	29	Black British	4 months	3 M	1	yes	no	Heroin
Katherine	28	Black British	6 months	6 M	2	yes	no	Heroin/ Cocaine
Laura	39	White British	6 months	6 M	1	yes	yes	Heroin
Magda	23	White British	5 months	8 M	5	yes	yes	Heroin
Natasha	41	White British	2 weeks	18 M	5	yes	yes	Alcohol
Olga	24	White British	4 months	4M	4	no	no	no
Pauline	23	White British	3 months	6M	1	yes	yes	no
Erika	24	White British	6 months	18 M	2	no	no	Heroin

<sup>40</sup> At the time of the first interview (collection period August 26<sup>th</sup>- September 29<sup>th</sup> 2011).

<sup>41</sup> Length of time spent in prison the last time the participant was in prison: approximated to whole weeks/months

<sup>42</sup> M=Months

<sup>43</sup> W=Week(s)

<sup>44</sup> R= Remand prisoner

<sup>45</sup> U= Undisclosed

Regina	26	White British	1 week	18 M	6	yes	yes	Heroin
Susan	35	Mixed	2 weeks	3 M	1	yes	no	Heroin
Tanya	37	Mixed	2 months	2 M	1	yes	yes	no
Emily	22	Black British	6 months	6M	1	no	no	no
Vera	23	White Other	5 months	12 M	1	no	yes	no
Alicia	42	White British	4 months	6 M	2	no	no	Heroin
Natalie	42	White British	3 months	5 M	1	yes	no	Heroin/Cocaine
Yolanda	37	White British	6 months	5 M	1	no	no	Heroin

### *Empirical Part 2: Posted long-answer questionnaires to women prisoners*

After some discussions about my project with staff at Women In Prison (WIP) in 2010, I had agreed to collaborate with them to develop a day-long workshop to be delivered to women prisoners at HMP Bronzefield. The workshop's subject was 'body-image and self esteem among women prisoners'. The intention of this workshop was to encourage women prisoners to reflect upon the prison's impact on their self-esteem, body-image, health, overall identities and embodiment. The participants discussed issues of femininity and sexuality, diet and exercise, self-injury and anxiety, punishment and pain, and previous experiences of abuse. In addition, they were also asked to comment on some of the findings from an empirical study on the health of women prisoners (Plugge et al. 2006). I was responsible for designing the workshop (i.e. putting together the materials in the form of a handbook and preparing discussion questions and group exercises), based on my interview questions and review of the literature.

The initial plan was that I would facilitate the workshop jointly with a staff member from WIP, and that this would allow access for brief ethnographic research and interviews with serving prisoners. However, the process of negotiating my access to the prison for this workshop started in September 2010 and ended unsuccessfully in March 2011. As a consequence of this, I decided to put together a long-answer questionnaire to be disseminated to the workshop participants. The questions in the questionnaire were related to my original interview questions and, assuming the preceding discussions during the workshop, the questionnaire was intended to feedback the women's reflections derived from the workshop. All of the participants in the workshop completed a questionnaire and these were then posted to me via my WIP contact. Since these participants had taken part in the workshop I designed, their responses were more extensive and informed than would usually be the case with questionnaires. Their long-answer responses to the questionnaire were transcribed and analysed qualitatively. The questionnaires raised similar themes to those derived from the interviews. However, because the questionnaire sample was relatively small (N=16) and because I had no direct contact with the participants, the thesis prioritises the interviews with the ex-prisoners in its analysis (i.e. Empirical Part 1). I used the findings

from these questionnaires mainly to inform and triangulate the interview data. The two samples were not significantly different in relation to ethnicity, age, sentence length and other demographic factors. **Table 5** summarises the sample of questionnaire participants.

**Table 5: Demographic overview of the questionnaire sample**

Participant <sup>46</sup>	Age	Ethnic Background	Time spend in prison <sup>47</sup>	Time left to serve	Previous Convictions/ prison sentences	Practice/ experience of self-injury	Past abuse	Addiction (previous/ on-going)
Q Anait	40	White British	4.5 M	6 M <sup>48</sup>	5 previous	yes	yes	no
Q Benita	31	White British	1.5 M	4.5 M	6	yes	yes	no
Q Calliope	21	Mixed	2 M	3 M	Yes U	no	no	no
Q Daphne	21	Black British	6 M	6 M	1	no	no	Heroin and Cocaine
Q Marina	21	Black British	8 M	2M	1	yes	no	Heroin
Q Ferya	22	Black British	13 M	U	1	yes	yes	Heroin
Q Joanne	23	Other white	9 M	3 M	0	yes	no	Heroin
Q Helen	26	White British	5 M	1 M	2	no	no	no
Q Agnes	42	White British	5 M	1 M	5	yes	yes	Heroin and Cocaine
Q Cassandra	24	White British	12 M	6 M	4	no	no	Heroin
Q Lilly	22	White British	18 M	U	Yes U	no	no	no
Q Maria	29	White British	23 M	U	0	no	yes	no
Q Natasha	33	Mixed	2 M	3M	8	no	yes	Heroin
Q Lindsey	38	White British	3 M	2M	5	yes	yes	Heroin
Q Nicole	29	White British	5 M	7 M	8	no	yes	no
Q Nadia	43	White British	7 M	2 M	6	yes	yes	Heroin

### *Ethics and Safety*

Qualitative empirical research can entail ethical risks which can usually be controlled for by careful consideration of the participants' interests. Although participation in the study was not in any way compelled, the freedom of consent that prisoners give to research is inevitably questionable given that the decision to be a prisoner is not voluntary in the first place. An ethical consideration in relation to this research was that I had to resort to access through gatekeepers, who could potentially influence the selection of participants and their consensual participation. In note of this, I am aware that some of the questionnaire participants may have chosen to participate in the questionnaire study through the encouragement of WIP and possibly felt a sense of obligation after having attended the aforementioned workshop.

Having said this, participation in the study was voluntary and no incentives were offered. However, adopting a case study approach also meant that my data involved a form of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967), where the ultimate intention was to

<sup>46</sup> Questionnaire participants are referred to with a prefix 'Q' followed by a pseudonym

<sup>47</sup> The workshop took place on July 2011; the question asked: How long have you been in prison for?

<sup>48</sup> M=Months; U= undisclosed

engage profoundly with a small sample that showed interest in engaging with the specific elements of this project. For this reason it was essential to advertise the study in advance and allow the participants to reflect independently before deciding to take part. Both questionnaire and interview participants were offered an information sheet with details of the research project and were asked to read it before signing the consent form. The consent form also asked participants' permission to use a tape recorder (in the case of the interviews) and to use the data provided for publications following the study.

The interpretive nature of my research questions means that my research required its participants to personally involve themselves in the topics discussed. For instance, many of the answers to my questions reveal personal and strongly emotional information. Therefore, I wanted to take all steps possible to ensure that I was sensitive to the participants' views and confessions, but also gave them the time, where possible, to reflect, pause or refuse to answer a specific question. Finally, in the consent form, I asked the participants to refrain from disclosing information that could provide grounds for a criminal prosecution. I treated all information provided as confidential. Moreover, I ensured that all the transcripts and the data I use in this study were anonymised and I kept the audio recordings of the interviews and all other information in a secure location. I obtained ethical approval for a 'High-Risk' study which meant that I had the chance to address ethical considerations at an early stage of the research (see Appendix 2).

The safety of the participants was central to this project; thus I constructed my questions to be non-judgmental (e.g., I avoided asking "why" questions) and I ensured that the participants in both the questionnaires and the interviews were informed about the study and understood their rights as participants (e.g. explained they could refrain from answering questions and could ask for their data to be eliminated from the study up until October 2012). Also, I was aware that asking participants to talk about past experiences of abuse, punishment and imprisonment, along with discussions about self-esteem or self-injury, could cause anxiety or distress during or after the interview (Shaw 2005; Plummer 2001). Consent was therefore negotiated throughout the interview process and not just at the start of the interviews. Moreover, both the questionnaires and the interviews ended with questions asking the women to reflect on optimistic aspects of their lives in order to end in a positive and light mood. All of my participants were encouraged to contact me if they felt distressed or wanted to talk after the interview. The follow-up interviews were important not only for purposes of data collection but also because the participants felt comfortable enough to engage with the topic on a second occasion. I used these opportunities to ask if the research

had affected them in any distressing manner. All the participants who took part in these follow-up discussions said that the interviews were a positive experience.

I was wary of misinterpreting the stories of the participants; therefore, it became essential to seek their approval through the follow-up interviews by offering a summary of the preliminary findings and confirming with them the direction of my interpretations. Focusing primarily on the protection of my research participants, I had not anticipated the possibility of my own emotional distress from the fieldwork process. Admittedly some of the interviews left me quite emotionally drained and the reflections that this experience provoked allowed me to immerse myself deeply in both the participants' stories and the research.

## **4.2 Asking Questions**

### ***Justification of methods: case study approach and qualitative research***

Although case study research as a method has received criticisms that challenge its scientific ability to produce generalisable results (Dogan and Pelassy 1990: 121), it is undisputable (as the phenomenologists have shown) that our acquisition of new knowledge heavily relies on 'several thousand concrete cases' of varying expertise (Flyvbjerg 2006: 222). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), a qualitative case study is 'an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources' (Baxter and Jack 2008: 544), which allows for a multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that context-specific knowledge 'along with our own experiences' is at the core of our processes of learning and understanding the world. Therefore, the case study is a vital research method as well as a fundamental 'method of learning' (Flyvbjerg: 222). According to this perspective, context-independent knowledge confines the learner/researcher to a beginner's level, depriving her from accessing specific and more in-depth knowledge. Flyvbjerg (2006) explains:

Great distance to the object of study and lack of feedback easily lead to a stultified learning process, which in research can lead to ritual academic blind alleys, where the effect and usefulness of research becomes unclear and untested. As a research method, the case study can be an effective remedy against this tendency. (Flyvbjerg 2006: 223)

Having said this, there is probably no knowledge produced by the social sciences that constitutes general and context-independent knowledge (Gelsthorpe 2007). Consequently, it was deemed in this research that the case study method is appropriate to the study of subjectivity and lived experience (Campbell 1975: 179; Gadd and Jefferson 2007: 8).

There are two key approaches to the case study methodology (Baxter and Jack 2008), both derived from a constructivist paradigm. Under this paradigm there can be many “truths”, depending on one’s subjective perspective. There is recognition of the pluralism inherent in interpretation and the contextualised understanding of social life (Plummer 2001). Under a social-constructionist approach, reality is relative to different actors. Therefore, the case study method allows the participant to express her version of the reality she experienced, allowing the researcher to get an insight into a variety of perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher in a case study is not seeking to provide an objective account, but focusing instead on the subjective stories of each participant. This approach is particularly relevant to criminological research. As Gelsthorpe (2007: 537) argues ‘case examples have always been important and among criminology’s memorable inscription devices’. This may be because, as Yin (2003) argues, one should employ a case study approach when the central purpose of the research is to answer “how” and “why” certain experiences or phenomena occur.

Yin (2003) explains that case studies are particularly appropriate when the context is intrinsically linked to the occurrence of the phenomenon. Context is what is often thought important to the occurrence of a phenomenon or behaviour: the setting and the particular physical space where this occurs. This aspect of my case study is limited in that the focus of the discussions was the experience of imprisonment, but the discussions that I primarily relied upon took place retrospectively of this experience and outside prison. However, my case study with ex-prisoners relied on a variety of different contexts which served to highlight the ‘liminality’ and permeability of prison space (Moran 2013a; 2013b). For example, I met the first two participants at their home and, interestingly, many of their explanations about their time in prison were often compared to this “house”. Being, therefore, physically present in that setting was significant to understand the participants’ perspective. Deciding what the case of analysis will be relies heavily on the research question and, as Miles and Huberman (1994) explain, a case is ‘a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context’ (1994: 25). Determining the case therefore means determining the unit of analysis. In my case, the unit of analysis was re-appropriated after failed attempts to gain research access inside a prison. Re-appropriating my target research participants to fit my realistic options of access meant acknowledging some research limitations, but also opening up my investigation of the experience of imprisonment to a wider and more diverse unit of analysis.



After establishing my new case, I had to appropriate the breadth of my research questions into the limits of a single case. I achieved this by placing boundaries on my case (Yin 2003; Stake 1995). These were based on: 1) setting a specific time since the participants' release from prison (6 months or less); and 2) working with participants in two sets of interview phases (initial interviews and follow-up interviews). The case was also unifying, in that it was based on a semi-structured interview schedule so that all of the stories reflected on the same topics. Another unifying factor was that all of the participants were offered the same definitions for key concepts of the study, including the concepts of "body-image" and "health". To make the case representative, I had to limit its scope and also allow voluntary participation for all who fitted these unifying criteria.

Using qualitative methods to pursue this research was the most appropriate option, as my research questions are inherently exploratory with a pledge to inductive reasoning (Bachman and Schutt 2007). Through the interviews, I hoped to develop in-depth conversations with the participants, touching on their thoughts, experiences, feelings, views and perceptions (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 12). My questions would not benefit from a quantitative perspective because they were seeking the subjective expressions of experience that could not have been predicted and categorised in advance. Moreover, the participants themselves expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk freely about intimate matters they thought to be taboo. As one participant explained:

When they first told me there is a researcher around, to tell you the truth, I didn't feel like coming. I thought it was doing those tests and having to think about what we learnt from prison [...] you know ... it's so good to just sit here and talk about these things. Sometimes it feels like we are not supposed to talk about these things even after we leave [prison]. (Regina)

Furthermore, qualitative methods were a valid choice because I was concentrating more on social phenomena rather than the distinct features of a social group. In doing this, I aimed to portray the ways in which female prisoners' experiences are self-conceptualised and the ways in which they choose to represent their identities both as women and as ex-prisoners.

The flexibility I allowed for my interviews meant that I could conduct interviews one-on-one but also with groups. For example, the first interview I conducted was with two participants. Another reason I chose interviews as my main method is because interviews allow for 'very detailed and extensive data, such as case histories ... or records of behaviour' (Fielding 1993: 138). I engaged with the participants' histories, often asking them about their background before imprisonment and their current lifestyles, essentially asking the

participants to place their prison experience within their broader life narrative through crucial “moments” in their lives (Schlosser 2008).

Identity moments, then are the particularly relevant life situations that retrospectively enacted some change in the life path of the individual’s future. An identity moment will bring to life within the participant’s memory other moments that might not have occurred without the inception of the original or prefacing moments. Like a roadmap that gradually unfolds with various attractions along the way, the narrative will evolve and become more complete with each moment revealed. (Schlosser 2008:1516)

The main intention of my interviews was to conduct a type of “life history” interview appropriate to feminist research (DeVault 1990). The goal was to ask and listen to women’s stories presented from their testimonies with all the complexities and irregularities that memory can put into place, while also taking into account the limitations of language in articulating women’s experiences and emotions (McKinnon 1982). For this reason, along with the audio-recorded material I gathered in the interviews, I actively engaged in observation within the interview site, reflecting on the participants’ said and unsaid responses (see Section 4.3).

The interviews followed two crucial principles: first, the questions asked had to be as open-ended as possible to avoid “rehearsed positions”; and second, the questions had to be phrased in a way that encouraged the respondents to share their views, beliefs and attitudes rather than providing an ‘easy answer’ (Fielding: 138). The main rationale behind the questions I asked was to promote honest and comfortable discussion. This worked in most cases, although there was a case where, especially at the start of an interview, the participant chose to give “logical” explanations for her behaviour, rather than engage in emotionally-reflexive discussion. This participant displayed a lack of experience in putting her feelings into words. Observation in this case helped me to continue the interview with different questions that were less directly related to the topic under discussion. For example, the participant and I ended up discussing her drug habit in some detail and towards the end of the interview she showed me her injection marks and self-injury wounds to explain something she could not articulate in words. Showing her arms she said, ‘see what I mean? It doesn’t feel good to have these on, does it?’ (Susan). In this case, the interview plan I had prepared required adjustment and specification.

The interviews started with survey-like, demographic questions and allowed for a smooth and slow transition into more personal and conceptual questions (See Appendix 3A). Furthermore, a qualitative perspective allowed me to develop a more profound relationship with the participants. I obtained this through conscious efforts to protect their confidentiality

and respect their views. Concentrating the study on a small number of individuals meant that I could conduct some basic (embodied) observations about their reaction to the study and their recollections of prison. Therefore, I let my theoretical approach actively inform the process of my data collection and interpretation. As Schlosser (2008) explains, engaging with such reflexivity allows us to ‘recognize our own parts in the construction of the narrative [...] [which] may reveal the multiple depths embedded in a seemingly routine recording’ (2008: 1513). Moreover, I felt that the research methods should not only reflect the researcher’s interests but should also offer accessible communicative means for the participants. In consideration for the social group I was researching, it was important that the participants had the chance to voice their views in the ways they thought most appropriate. This allowed for a feminist understanding of the political dimensions of personal and emotional experiences from women who represent the effects of social inequality and oppression on several levels. For this reason, even when I had to resort to posting questionnaires to serving prisoners, I encouraged the respondents to reflect on the topic in whatever ways they found most expressive.

### ***Interviews***

As Rubin and Rubin (1995: 64) explain, the strength of exploratory qualitative research lies in allowing the freedom ‘to follow your data where they lead’. This also means adapting each interview to the flow of the feelings and interpretations shared by the participant. It often includes observation of non-verbal cues and following up on symbolic meaning and expressions that go beyond the prescribed structure of the interview. In this sense, data collection from interviews is inevitably interwoven with observations of non-discursive articulations.

The researchers must listen to lengthy explanations, ask follow-up questions tailored on the preceding answers, and seek to learn about interrelated belief systems or personal approaches to things rather than measure a limited set of variables. (Bachman and Schutt 2007: 281)

Therefore, the interviews provided me with much more data than the questionnaires, particularly because they took on average 2 hours in the first meeting and another 1.5 in the follow-up meeting.

The arrangement and sensitive conduct of intensive interviews required that I establish rapport with the participants by preparing for the various ways in which they could react to the interview process and questions. In this regard, it was important to respect the participants’ time and their superiority of knowledge on the subject. The interviewer-interviewee relationship is never equal, as the interviewer is keen to acquire information on a

specific topic and consciously follows a strategy to develop the appropriate relationship with the interviewee which will allow her to obtain the necessary information. The interaction is not insincere but it is nevertheless planned for the specific purposes of the research project. Therefore, although intensive interviews allow the participants to give a unique structure and variety of perspectives on the topic, all of my interviews followed a broadly similar structure in that I started my interaction with each participant aiming to make them feel comfortable and explaining the objective of the interview (Bachman and Schutt 2007: 283). I intentionally maintained a professional distance from all of the participants, while at the same time promoting a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. I always maintained eye contact and chose to take notes only when absolutely necessary. My observations were written down directly after each interview, once the participant or I had left the site.

The pace of the interview depended on each participant, I allowed time for reflection and, given the sensitive nature of some questions, I allowed the participants to unwind and take their time. There were moments of interruption in some interviews where, for example, some participants had to talk on the phone, or another participant had to briefly attend to her daughter in another room. I pursued information with 'nondirective probes' (Bachman and Schutt 2007: 283) by asking, 'can you tell me more about this?' or, 'what makes you feel/think that?' The interviews always ended with the participant having the last word and allowed time for her to express any last reflections or feelings that could possibly distress her later.

### *Questionnaires*

The self-completed questionnaire, in contrast to the interviews, involved a fixed set of questions and followed a structure that would allow for the responses to be considered in the form of a structured interview. In this sense, every question in the questionnaire asked the participant to reflect on a topic, such as health, and followed with a related question on the same topic, asking the respondent to explain their view with an example. The questionnaire was phrased in a broad way, yet it specifically asked the participants to reflect on details of their everyday life in prison (See Appendix 3B). Moreover, the questionnaire was phrased deliberately in a format that invited participants to express their point of view through illustrations and examples of specific moments in their prison experience (Schlosser 2008).

The questionnaires began with the same demographic survey provided to the interview participants (asking details such as age and ethnicity). These were followed by

questions on the broad theme of health, health-care services, food in prison and nutritional well-being. The next section comprised longer-answer questions referring to more emotional aspects of the prison experience, particularly in regard to body-image, self-esteem, self-injury and views on how imprisonment acted as punishment. The questionnaire ended with a section asking the participants to reflect on what they like most about their personalities, bodies and lives.

Once I received the questionnaires via mail, I jotted down my initial reflections and transcribed the responses. The use of questionnaires, particularly in the prison context, comes with several disadvantages that I had to acknowledge during the analysis of the data. As Bertrand and Hughes (2005) indicate, questionnaires:

- Provide simple answers to simple questions, so they cannot help to establish thick description or to understand process or social context.
- Depend upon the capacity of the researcher to ask ambiguous questions, dependent on clear definitions, but in social and cultural research definitions are always influenced by the context.
- Depend upon the capacity of the respondent to answer, and their willingness to do so honestly, so questionnaire answers are always inherently unreliable.
- The simpler the questions, the less chance for misunderstanding, but also the more chance that respondents will assume that the questionnaire is not important and will not give it serious attention.
- There will always be a proportion of non-response or incomplete response: taking a larger sample than strictly necessary helps to reduce the effect of this, but may exacerbate bias. (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 69-70)

In regard to the first point, I also found that the need to simplify my research questions to construct the questionnaire, along with the fact that I was not present to explain the objectives of the project to the participants in person, meant that the questionnaire produced an oversimplified account that was not always as engaged and detailed as the responses I received during the interviews. The questions I put in the questionnaire were open-ended and broad, which meant some of the responses did not show clear understanding of the precise focus of the project. The fact that not all respondents took the same time to reflect on the questions was obvious from their responses; for instance, 3 of the 16 questionnaires were partially incomplete. . Having said this, the majority of the questionnaires returned to me displayed remarkable engagement with the subject. Overall, I chose to qualitatively analyse the questionnaires in the form of structured interviews and used this data mainly as verification of the relevance of each theme to current prisoners.

### **4.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

#### ***Field notes and diary***

The data analysis of qualitative research begins in the field. It is during the data collection process that the researcher gains an insight into the reality of the topic under investigation and thus starts to note down several concepts or emerging themes that help understand the context of the research and begin to gain a perspective on the research questions. The following crucial step is reading through the field notes and the researcher's diary. After every interview, I deliberately spent some time alone to write down my initial impressions, feelings, and observations on both the interview discussion and the interview process. I also reflected on other, non-discursive clues noticed during the interviews that led me to understand the participants' experiences better, particularly in regard to embodiment and self-injury. The notes, handwritten in a notebook, formed the beginning of my analysis, as I identified developing themes and made connections between different participants' examples and stories. I found returning back to these notes essential in re-capturing the atmosphere of each interview and re-connecting with the data collection process. Parts of the field-notes diary include elaborate discussions or critiques of theories as contested by the empirical observations I made. Other parts of the diary acted as a platform for brainstorming on emerging concepts, such as "pain" and "health". This diary also includes reflections on the process of the interview and its success. For instance, I wrote after one of my first interviews, 'I should have had a more concrete plan for directing the participant to keep focused on the topic, she kept diverting my attention on to unrelated issues, she was quite nervous at the start and kept moving items on the table which was quite distracting' (August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011). I also kept a record of how I met each participant and how our interaction evolved throughout the interview process. This was particularly useful when analysing the 13 case-study participants after the follow-up discussions.

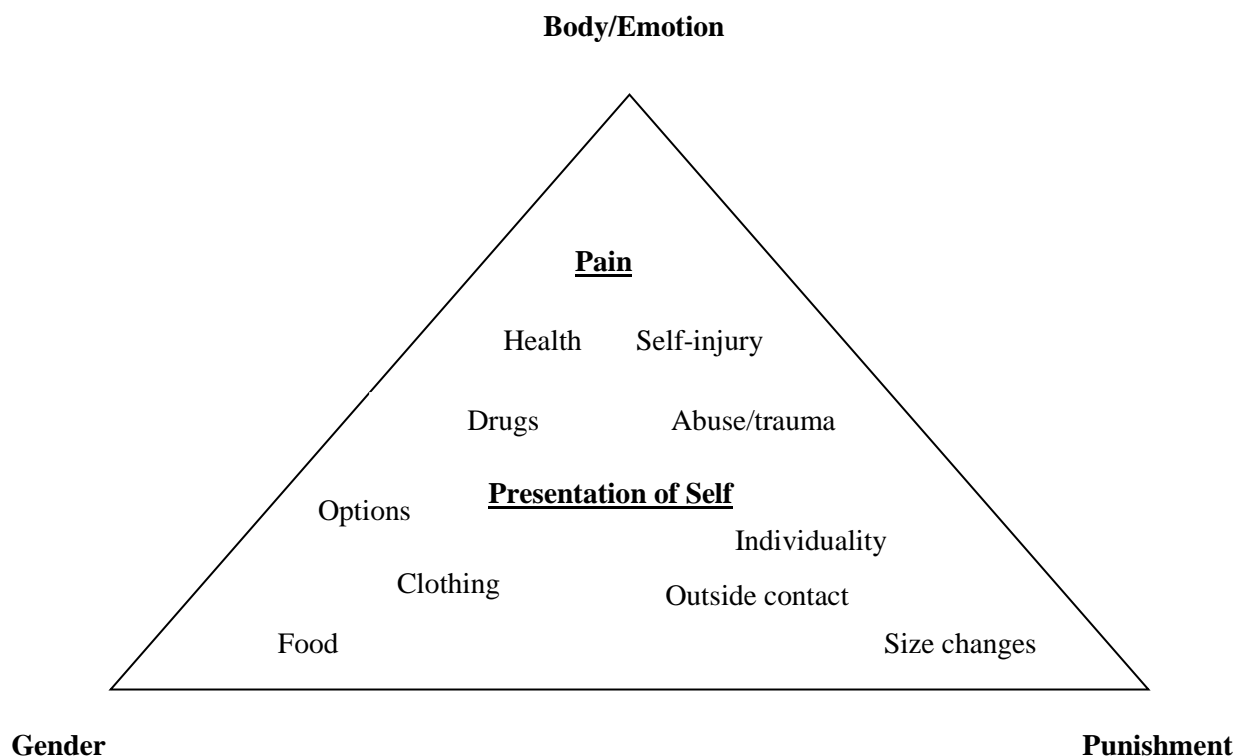
The field notes were predominantly useful during the data analysis of the transcripts. Returning to the notes I wrote at the time of each interview allowed me to better understand the concepts and context of each transcript and to incorporate other information into the stories told, like the participants' physical presentation and tone, and the embodied awareness they reflected during the interview. My physical interaction with and the visual representation of participants' scars or wounds, along with the emotions these caused both to the participant and myself, were particularly important aspects of the coding that followed. Also, my field notes were essential sources for writing this methodology chapter and acted as a crucial record of various details that would otherwise have been lost.

### *Transcribing and making stories*

Choosing how to transcribe interviews is an initial step in the process of organising the tape-recorded material. My method of transcribing started by typing down everything said on the recorder, indicating pauses in the text and adding in brackets visual observations of recollections from my field notes (e.g. [sighs] or [pulls sleeve to show scars]). I typed out my questions/comments but formatted the transcripts so that the participants' contributions and my own were distinguishable. After finishing each interview transcript, I added a summary from my observations and field notes. By early November 2011 I had transcribed all the interviews verbatim. I tried as much as possible to stay true to the participant's way of talking, dialect or slang, but I also tried to maintain an easy way of understanding the conversations in written form. After transcribing the interviews, I reviewed them by making notes in the margins identifying developing themes or concepts. I used coloured pens and highlighters to identify emerging topics and themes, but also to underline significant statements. Also, I put together brief summaries of each interview as a form of analysis and quick reference to the main points discussed.

After I had a detailed record of all the transcripts, I returned to my diary notes to make connections between the two forms of data and to confirm or challenge initial observations. At this stage, I started keeping a record of not only dominant perspectives and themes, but also of issues arising in the interviews on which I would need further information in order to construct a plan for the follow-up interviews. After several readings of the interview transcripts I put together a list of concepts and a simple diagram derived from the initial reading of the data (see **Diagram 1**). At this stage, I was trying to understand where the emerging themes fit in the relationship between body/emotions, gender and punishment. After meeting the 13 participants for follow-up discussions, I went through my interview summaries and notes with each participant and clarified points from their initial interview. We discussed emerging themes and I received feedback on my process of interpretation and my initial conclusions. After these second meetings, I added necessary data to the transcripts and put together a case summary of both the first and the second dialogue with the 13 participants. This summary was more detailed and relied not only on the existing transcripts and follow up notes, but also on my field notes and theoretical preconceptions. In constructing these case summaries, I used guidance from narrative analysis (McCormack 2004) and had started to evaluate cases comparatively in terms of themes, relationships, concepts and overall content.

**Diagram 1: Overview of the emerging themes derived from the initial reading of the transcripts/diary.**



By January 2012 I had compiled a vast and diverse amount of data and completed preliminary analysis. By this stage I had also put all the transcripts onto Nvivo and followed with coding. Although I was concerned that using this software could fragment and take the participants' responses out of context (Coffey et al 1996), overall I found it useful for organising the large amounts of data I had and for managing it in terms of the themes I had already derived. Keeping the data organised in themes instead of the unhelpful format of separate interviews allowed me to view it in a broader way as connected stories.

### ***Conceptualising, categorising, coding and Nvivo***

The first stages of coding were tedious and retrospectively, unhelpful. I started by coding every aspect of the transcripts, putting into themes every subject mentioned, thus constantly producing new codes on Nvivo. At this beginning stage, I was treating each interview separately, but as commonalities started to emerge among the codes, I started putting sections of different interviews under categories thematically organised on the basis of the project's research questions. However, I noticed that I tended to see as developing themes only those categories that received, quantitatively, more attention from most participants. For example, I would assume that because many participants mentioned their first days in prison, this was a more significant theme than less-mentioned themes such as



details of grooming while in prison. Therefore, I had to prioritise the qualitative importance of certain themes, especially those more related to the objectives of this study, and avoid a quantitative perspective. During the process of coding, I had to acknowledge that I was not objectively deriving “emerging” themes; I was rather starting to be selective with themes and would prioritise certain conceptualisations and ideas over others that were less relevant to this study. In this sense, my own research objectives were an important driving force in the interpretation and coding of the data.

I had already decided after the follow-up interviews that I would focus on a set of themes that I identified with the participants. These themes were chronological in nature. Through my initial review of the transcripts I noticed the natural narrative character of the participants’ stories, which jumped from the present, the past before imprisonment, past while in prison and their current perspective on the future, thus engaging in a subjective perception of temporality (Heidegger 1962). I focused on the specific ways their bodies changed, the impact of these changes and the influences that sparked these changes. The leading themes at this stage included: changes in health and the impact of rehabilitation, detoxification and medical treatment, the conflicting pressures from outside and from inside prison, and the role of visiting days, outside contact and prisoner culture in developing certain attitudes to physical appearance and overall representation. Moreover, I wanted to investigate further the interaction between imported characteristics, particularly in regard to the practice of self-injury during and after imprisonment, and the process of experiencing punishment and the ‘pains of imprisonment’ through embodied awareness.

At this stage, I had developed themes from a top-down approach, where acknowledging that I was searching for and privileging certain themes allowed me to prioritise the topics most relevant to my theoretical propositions. After gaining information on the aforementioned themes, I was now able to start looking at the 24 case narratives in a chronological manner, following my theoretical focus on these participants’ background experiences before imprisonment, followed by their particular coping techniques and experience of confinement, divided into the positive and negative impacts that imprisonment had on them. Following the broader structure and an emerging question of how, why and to what effect the body changes during imprisonment, I organised all of the themes emerging both from the case study and the questionnaires, to understand them in relation to this flexible, malleable and sensitive approach to the experience of the changing body.

As coding progressed, the same parts of transcripts would be coded under several codes. These reflected the topic's different aspects and inter-relatedness under the larger umbrella themes of embodied experience, embodied identity, pained bodies and punishment, and time and space in embodying confinement (or the punishment-body relation). These included, for instance, the interaction between pain, addictions, health and coping strategies, or the interaction between themes related to appearance and self-presentation, the emotional aspects of eating and prison food and the experience of the changing, growing body in prison. My field-notes and diary were crucial in journeying through smaller to larger themes, helping me both reflect on my interpretations and understand the reasons why I focused on specific themes and not others.

After I had developed quite a thorough understanding of the data, I re-read my entire data (coded transcripts from interviews and questionnaires) to look for subthemes I had left behind and code for themes that emerged from the data unintentionally (i.e. not dictated by the objectives of the study). Developing these sub-themes was essential for pragmatic purposes. For example, as I had already started to develop theoretical work on the emotional understanding of pain, I decided to look for the interconnection between emotional and purely corporeal manifestations of the 'pains of imprisonment' through, for example, drug use in prison and self-injury practices. Self-injury did not act as a main component of this study until I started coding my data and realised its complexity and prevalence among the participants, but also its relevance in illustrating the theoretical arguments made in this study. Developing these sub-themes under the main codes helped me to further familiarise myself with the data. Being sceptical of the potential to pick themes unrelated to my theoretical interests objectively, I tried to let the data "speak for itself" about topics that were not directly connected to the project. This process helped me to contextualise each response more specifically to the biographical narratives of the participants. For example, although it was beyond the initial aims of my study, an overarching theme was the continued punishment of prisoners *after* release, either through limited services and support available or through financial restraints leading back to crime. This last review of the data allowed me not only to see what I was interested in finding in regard to my theoretical interests, but also to acknowledge the primary concerns and problems of the participants.

#### **4.4 Methodology**

This thesis employs a phenomenological and feminist methodology because by its nature the objective of this study is to obtain a subjective account of the prison which

requires a profound engagement with the participants' emotions and personal accounts of the 'pains of imprisonment'. The subject of study itself (women who have experienced imprisonment) is sensitive and complex, and as Liebling (1999) argues, understanding such experiences requires a subjective and emotionally-centred account of the prison:

The absence of 'pain' or emotion from quantitative (and indeed, most qualitative) research accounts of prison life has always baffled me. Research in any human environment without subjective feeling is almost impossible (particularly, I would argue in a prison). (Liebling 1999: 149)

Arguably an exploration of emotions as embodied and socio-culturally specific notions and as ways of engaging with the world (Satre 1943 [1993]), can allow a more nuanced referential content that reflects the prison experience and communicates what imprisonment *feels* like as an active means of coping with it. Such an approach, I argue, will make the prisoner experience more visible and will allow the prisoner or ex-prisoner to express her suffering within a more flexible and expressive communicative field.

Research on imprisonment can be characterised by a surprising neutrality and an attempt to remain "objective" and apolitical about issues that are inherently subjective and emotional (as also pointed out by Bosworth et al. 2005 and Jewkes 2012a and argued by Becker 1967). Largely due to this resistance to display subjectivity in much of the existing research, and also due to an acknowledgment of the highly politicised aspects of granting prison access for research, I found it essential to be open about my ideological agenda in regard to penal politics. The main ideological purpose of this thesis is to voice the experiences of women prisoners through their own words and narrative. In doing this, I aim to articulate their embodied punishment and manifest their feelings as meanings derived from their embodied experiences and memories. Therefore, I work with experiences and emotions as significant sources of knowledge for a sustained critique of the penal practices and the prison world.

This engagement with the emotional and embodied experience of imprisonment is not only a necessary methodological tool, but, in this thesis, it is also an ideological basis for pursuing prisons research in the first place. As Foucault noted, the speech and resistance of the prisoners is what really matters, and this is what the purpose of the prison research exercise should remain focused on:

When the prisoners began to speak, they possessed an individual theory of prisons, the penal system and justice. It is this form of discourse which ultimately matters, a discourse against power, the counter discourse of prisoners and those we call delinquents and not a theory *about* delinquents. (Foucault, 1977: 209, emphasis in original cited in Howe 1994: 121)

Staying true to the words of the participants of this empirical case study is indispensable. However, the participants' expression and my understanding of their experiences were not limited to discursive clues.

### ***Phenomenology as methodology***

In trying to avoid the tendency to write *about* prisoners, the body of the prisoner as subject becomes a meaningful method of understanding and translating lived experience. Merleau-Ponty (1962: 82) argues that the body is not only our source of existence and connection with the world; it is also the vehicle through which we make sense of the world. *The body as a source of knowledge* can be both one's own body and the bodies of others. In the case of my interviews, my body and the participants' bodies were intrinsic to the research process. Following a phenomenological methodology means in practice that through the design and conduct of my empirical research, I engaged reflexively with and acknowledged the function of varying bodies involved in the research process. I specifically employed three interpretive aspects from the body in order to conduct and analyse my research. These are derived from Finlay's (2008) phenomenological strategies for attending to the body during research.

The first layer of embodied interpretation classified by Finlay is: '*bodily empathy*' which refers to a general consideration of the participants' bodies and the experiences they carry. To do this I intentionally attended to the participants' gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, bodily movements and overall positioning during the interviews. I believe that this attentiveness revealed more about their lived experiences than their words alone could express. The significance of bodily gestures for the researcher, Finlay (2008) argues, is that, unlike words, bodily gestures are 'not just a reflection of a person's subjective feelings – they *are* the feelings' (2008: 23). For example, when one of my participants burst into tears during the interview, she was not just illustrating her sadness; I was witnessing and I was fully engaged with her sadness. The physical manifestation of feeling is what makes feeling recognisable, and those tears *were* sadness. Put another way, empathy with the participants' emotions can effectively be achieved only through careful attentiveness to their body language, and it is precisely for this reason that I argue in this thesis that the 'pains of imprisonment' must be understood through the prisoner's body. As Merleau-Ponty (1962:172) teaches us, 'it is through his [*sic*] body that the other person's soul is soul in my eyes'.

The second interpretive tool that we can derive from the body according to Finlay (2008) is '*embodied self-awareness*': this is the process of self-reflection upon my own body during the interview process. These reflections I collected in the form of field notes, detailing how I felt about the participants' embodied experiences and observing how my body responded to the stories I heard and saw. The idea of self-awareness and reflexivity has been an intrinsic tool of qualitative research in prisons (see for example, Rowe 2011; Jewkes 2012a; Liebling 1999). However, the form of reflexivity that I am proposing aims to look deeper into my *embodied* interpretation and reaction to the research process as an involved observer, 'someone who is being affected and is affecting what is taking place' (Halling and Goldfarb 1991: 328). I found it essential to engage in this form of embodied reflexivity because on many occasions, my participants used my body as a comparative tool to express themselves. This relational interaction between me and the participant had as a central point our embodiment. The following is an extract from my fieldwork notes that I think shows the interaction becoming almost problematic for me as researcher, but which illustrates its centrality in understanding nuances in this area of research.

[Natasha] kept talking about my earrings, she said she liked them, she wanted to touch them so I took one off and offered it to her[...] She said she liked colours and that she never felt confident to wear red, and thought people would laugh at her for trying too hard:

*'Like you, see you are a young girl and you can wear whatever you want, you can wear red, you can make yourself be whatever you want, look at you, you can be who you want.'*

I knew she was looking at me and through her, I could see myself too. I wanted to turn the conversation back to talking about her, I really didn't feel comfortable. Then she said she wished she looked like a 'real woman'. I wanted to talk more about that, somehow we both knew what she meant, but she kept talking about the earrings, my clothes and how different I was, compared to her, '*do you know how lucky you are? You just look so right, no effort needed*' I started feeling quite nervous, I could catch her eyes looking at every detail of my body, I felt judged, or maybe I was guilty? She was holding my earring, telling me I was something she was not, I felt excluded and ashamed, our bodies separated and differentiated us and I couldn't find the words to reconnect us. She was holding something I had, and she didn't. I was good at performing femininity and she wasn't, I didn't justify myself to her, I asked if she wanted to take a walk with me, she agreed and I was relieved. (September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

It was through experiences like this that I knew that I, as an embodied agent, was an important component to the research process and the means through which the participants reflected and expressed their embodied identities. During discussions about femininity and the appearance of the body, some participants measured the success of their gendered performances in relation to my own embodied representation of gender, which they tended to believe reflected the "normal woman". On more than one occasion, the differences in our bodies were used as markers of the participants' social status and low self-esteem. Such

experiences inevitably affected how I managed my position during the interviews. There were instances when I felt particularly self-conscious and “evaluated” by the participants: this resulted in self-reflection during and after the interview. Meanwhile, as suggested by Gelsthorpe (2007), reflexivity and the researcher’s own feelings during the research process are to be acknowledged to enhance the value of interpretation and to consider the subjective meanings attached to such biases.

The third interpretive layer outlined by Finlay is ‘*embodied intersubjectivity*’, which refers to how, during the research process, all of the bodies involved and particularly the bodies of the researcher and participant(s), engage and merge in an empathetic interconnection and non-verbal communication, or what Finlay specifies as ‘the process of reciprocal intentionality that inhabits both the participant’s body and that of the researcher’ (2008: 20, 26). This process involves mirroring the participant’s experiences by re-enacting the participant’s existence based on her position, gestures and embodied awareness through my own reflective interpretation of it. However, this was not done to replace the significance of the participant’s experience with an autobiographic account. Indeed, there is a risk in privileging the researcher’s reflexivity over that of the participant (Crewe 2009). Therefore, self-reflexivity is used only to improve understanding of the situation under investigation with information that only a subjective-embodied experience of conducting research can provide. As Finlay argues:

If we are to accept Merleau-Ponty’s ideas [that the body holds our relation and interconnection with the world] ... then we should expect such mirroring experiences. They are part of the interpreting double-belongingness of our body-world relations. (Finlay 2008: 28)

As the phenomenological method entails, the interpretation of meaning and the analysis that follows it can only be cautious and developing (i.e. non-conclusive and tentative), it can offer only one possible interpretation of the subject under investigation and it makes no claims to absolute truths.

While the subjective lived body (experienced pre-reflexively) is that which ‘is most intimately mine/me’ (Finlay 2008: 20), it is also an objective body, as it can be observed and studied. Therefore, it is also an ‘object for others’ (2008: 20). The subjective body then, allows me to experience a specific view of the world, but also to experience and reflect upon my own being within the world. Moreover, the body can be objectified by the observations of other bodies. Therefore, there is something significantly “empirical” about the body as object:

We can peer at, leer at, admire, criticise, probe, investigate and dissect another's body. In so doing, we become aware of it as a contained, material biological thing. We can also do this to our own bodies. (Finlay 2008: 21)

Most of the time, we experience our bodies as subjects: we are not aware of our bodies as separate from "us". The moment that we reflect upon our bodies however, our bodies become separate objects, subject to scrutiny and questioning. Therefore, engaging in embodied reflexivity inevitably entails an element of objectification. Admittedly, such a process of objectification can be emotionally difficult for both researcher and participant. Proponents of psychosocial approaches to research have suggested that a psychoanalytic perspective can help better understand the subject of investigation, her identity and the emotions and meanings derived from the research process (Gadd and Jefferson 2007: 46-53). In this study, I was particularly interested in engaging with an aspect of psychoanalytic method and therapy specific to the exchange of emotions between participant/client and researcher/therapist attained on a bodily level.

### ***Counter-transference and the researcher-participant relationship***

Psychoanalytic scholarship has considered profoundly the dynamics involved in the interaction between therapist and client. Earlier psychoanalytic work considered the emotional involvement between therapist and client and the therapist's subjective reaction to the client as a problem that therapists had to learn to master (McGuire 1974). More contemporary psychoanalytic work admits that this process of counter-transference, or emotional entanglement between therapist and client, is an integral aspect of both the analysis that the therapist pursues and the therapy that follows (Pines 1993). Field (1989) argues that counter-transference can be a) expressed as evocation of certain emotions in response to the client; b) can be manifested through a series of fantasies the therapist engages in during or after the session; c) can be expressed through the experience of certain dreams which are associated with a client; and finally, d) can occur through the invocation of physical feelings or reactions to the client. These emotional and bodily processes occur inevitably and often unconsciously, and they are essential sources of knowledge about the client (and the therapist). Although emotional expressions of counter-transference have received considerable attention, as Booth et al. (2010: 284) argue, 'the reactions within the therapist's body have been far less documented'.

Such body-centred counter-transference can be expressed, for example, when the therapist, and in the case of research, the researcher, mirrors the posture and bodily gestures of the client/ participant. This can be a very useful technique with which to gain insight about the participant and, as Mohacsy (1995) and other psychoanalysts have argued, non-

verbal observations can provide important clues about the client's (and by extrapolation the participant's) biography and internal world. However, according to Field (1989), such body-centred reactions can also be less helpful and often cause anxiety and embarrassment for the therapist. As Booth et al. explain, symptoms of such somatic counter-transference may include:

[...] nausea, headaches, becoming tearful, raising of the therapist's voice, unexpectedly shifting of the body, genital pain, muscle tension, losing voice, aches in joints, stomach disturbance, and numbness. However, this potentially useful technique when not monitored can result in the therapist unconsciously taking on the client's internal experience through their physical response. (Booth et al. 2010: 285)

The importance of counter-transference in such therapy settings alludes to the integral role of the therapist in the production of analysis. Similarly, the researcher is an active player in the process and interpretation of research, which can be significantly affected by the researcher's own emotional and bodily entanglement with any given research participant. Much like the therapist-client relationship, the researcher-participant relationship follows a linear structure whereby the participant is expected to reveal intimate and emotional information to a researcher who is not expected to gather this information through an exchange of information. This type of interaction and the limits it puts on the sharing of experiences between researcher and participant can invoke reactions that, even if suppressed, still matter to the research process. For example, during one interview, the participant talked about the offence she committed before going to prison: it involved a violent attack on a female stranger. My having been a victim of a similar crime not long before this interview, her description provoked in me a rather defensive reaction, which I could not share with her. It invoked in me, for part of the interview, feelings of fear and anger, and I noticed that during this time, I was physically withdrawn from her direction and avoided eye contact. This and other similar emotional interchanges between myself and the participants helped me realise that our biographies and experiences were integral to the process of the interviews and the clues that I used to interpret my data. In this sense, I had to acknowledge and try to understand why I could empathise more with some participants and less with others.

### ***Feminist epistemology***

The aims and perspectives of both feminism more broadly, and feminist criminology more specifically, have been diverse, but the overall focus is the representation of women's interests as political while proposing new possibilities for equality and social justice and advocating the need to address gender inequalities (Rafter and Heidensohn 1995). Following a feminist epistemological perspective, I attempted to dissolve barriers between myself and



the research participants (Fonow and Cook 1991; Gelsthorpe and Morris 1990) and tried to understand what the participants wanted me to see through their narrations. My intention was to develop an exchange between the theory and the participants and to create a cohesive story that expressed a clear picture of changing bodies in prison, as well as the changing identities of women as a result of imprisonment and other patriarchal pressures.

A feminist methodology can be classified based on its 1) choice of topic (e.g. gendered identity or women's punishment), 2) the research process it follows (including the questions it asks and the methods it adopts), and 3) the management of power relations between researcher and participant (including an attempt to defuse a hierarchy between the researcher and the participants). Finally, feminist methodology should also be attentive towards expressing the subjective nature of conducting research (Gelsthorpe 1990: 90-93). For example, the power dynamics between researcher and participant are arguably accounted for through a reflexive approach. As Gelsthorpe and Morris (1990:87) write, 'self-awareness and self-criticism are the hallmarks of feminist methodologies'. It is therefore important that feminist researchers question their own perceptions and experiences and consider these as relevant in the making of data analysis. Importantly, feminist research considers lived experience as essential to theory-building:

[...] feminist research is concerned with theory which arises out of experience. Further, in feminist research perspectives conventional 'value free' research is replaced by conscious partiality. (Gelsthorpe 1990: 94)

In so doing, feminist research is also attentive to the lived experiences and biography of the researcher, particularly as these affect the choice of research, the process of data collection and its interpretation. It has been the intention of this study to adhere to all four of the aforementioned aspects of a feminist methodological perspective and as this chapter has shown embodied reflexivity was a conscious method of both self-questioning as well as attending to the lived experiences of my participants. More specifically, considering the embodied nature of emotions and attending to the body and its lived experiences during the data collection process as well as within the content of the data, informed my feminist agenda to pursue knowledge from the particular, subjective experiences of women from a reflexive perspective.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have detailed my research objectives and questions and explained how these informed my research design, research access and data collection process. After a review of my research methods and a justification of the approach I used, I explained how I analysed and interpreted my data. The empirical component of this thesis is based primarily

on a case study of 37 interviews that I conducted with 24 ex-prisoners in 2011 (13 of whom were interviewed twice)<sup>49</sup>. After battling with prison access problems, the study also explores 16 posted questionnaires from prisoners at HMP Bronzefield contributing to a total number of 40 respondents in this study (including both interviewees and questionnaire participants). Following the theoretical suggestions made by this thesis, I followed a reflexive, embodied approach to observe, collect data and interpret it in a way that focused on the embodied accounts of women's stories about the relationship between pain, punishment, emotions and identity and adhered to feminist methodological principles.

The perspective that this research follows is linked to my theoretical framework on the sociology of embodiment and emotions. Therefore, through an attempt to consider the particular narratives of the participants as emotional and embodied lived experiences, I argue that prisons research needs to turn towards a more *affective* methodological approach that not only considers the researcher's emotional reflections on the prison and the research experience (e.g. Jewkes 2012a), but also accounts for the significantly emotional and embodied elements of prisoner experiences that make them both difficult to express in a purely discursive manner and difficult to interpret "objectively". Embodiment, therefore, is seen as a source of knowledge about the lived world, and the bodies of the participants as subjects (and inevitably as objects) are used in this thesis as essential methodological resources in deconstructing and empathising with the complex experiences of women.

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<sup>49</sup> Total data collection time amounts to 11 days in the first phase of the interviews plus a further 5 days in the second phase of the interviews with 13 participants, totalling approximately 62 hours of audio recorded material overall.

## Chapter 5

### Materialising imprisonment: Bodily self-awareness, physical change and ambivalence in self meanings

The struggle against ambivalence is... both self-destructive and self-propelling. It goes on with unabating strength because it creates its own problems in the course of resolving them. Its intensity, however, varies over-time, depending on the availability of force adequate to the task or absence of awareness that the reduction of ambivalence is a problem of the discovery and application of proper technology: a management problem. Both factors combined to make modern times an era of a particularly bitter and relentless war against ambivalence. (Bauman 1991: 3)

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 review the findings derived from the empirical research that I conducted with women, 24 of whom were ex-prisoners and 16 were imprisoned during the data-collection period (July-December 2011). The themes considered in these chapters were discussed by both the interview participants and the questionnaire participants. The chapters focus on three instances in which prisoner bodies matter most in the experience of punishment. The first is during the various transformations the imprisoned body undergoes (Chapter 5). Second, bodies matter in the maintenance of self in prison and particularly the presentation and performance of self in various moments of the prison experience (Chapter 6). And finally, prisoner bodies are vital as key sources of survival and coping in prison (Chapter 7). Although the findings of this study are roughly divided into these three categories, themes within them overlap, highlighting the multi-faceted role of the body in the experience of imprisonment. These chapters aim to emphasise the particularity and diversity of women's embodied experiences and therefore, acknowledge that these may often contradict each other.

All of the interview participants adopted a comparative, *relational* approach to their recollections and narrations. They compared their imprisoned bodies with either before or after imprisonment, they compared prison with life outside or with what they called "normal" life, they compared themselves to "normal" or "average" women and, at times, compared themselves to me. This comparative perspective reflects the participants' realisation that their bodies and identities transformed in prison. The participants transcended their self-descriptions beyond the victim-versus-offender binary to produce a more complex image of women who had both serious needs and weaknesses, but at the same time had endured and survived damaging circumstances and experiences that had made them stronger than "average women" and sometimes dangerous to themselves and others. What these women did *not* distinguish between were the mental and physical effects of imprisonment. They had a strong sense of embodiment when they discussed their identities whereby mind and body seemed to merge into their overall understanding of selfhood,

womanhood, emotions and embodiment. These three chapters retain a similar comparative structure. Taken as a whole, all three chapters draw a picture of the participants' *double oppression*: they link women's prison experiences with their broader life narratives outside to show how limited our understanding of prison experiences can be if studied from a disembodied perspective focused only on time spent inside prison. The chapters are constructed through the participants' personal narratives, my own research diary reflections and connections with the relevant literature and theoretical paradigm of embodiment.

Chapter 5 shows that the body is the target of punishment, discipline and correction (Howe 1994) undergoing significant modifications while in prison. It demonstrates the sociological relevance of the experience and function of the *changing body* in prison, along with the meanings attached by prisoners to on-going bodily changes. It claims that these bodily changes are central to the punishment-body relation and the dialectical relationship between prison and bodies (Howe 1994). This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section introduces the participants' narratives by briefly contextualising their imprisonment to significant experiences *before* and *after* prison.

The second and main section illustrates *how* imprisonment changed the participants' bodies. It looks at bodily changes under four main themes. First, it considers the revival of the senses during imprisonment, drawing a unique picture of the prison that highlights its punitive nature and its painful and emotive elements. Within this sub-section, and throughout all three chapters in general, the sense of *time* and the sense of the body in the prison *space* are considered as key sensations that affect all other bodily perceptions. Next, I consider the specific physical changes of the body in prison, including ageing, and evaluate how these affect the position of the body in space and time relations in prison. The last sub-section evaluates how treatment in prison, and particularly detoxification from addictions and programmes of "doing health", change the prisoner's body and bring it to the fore of daily life in prison. The last sub-section follows participants' evaluations of medical services in prison to explain the resurgence of a pained and pathological body in prison that, as I argue, engages the prisoner in a process of both embodiment and 'dys-embodiment'. In other words, I suggest that bodily awareness in prison is experienced as both a welcome "fresh start" and as a painful process of self-realisation.

The third section evaluates the impact of bodily changes on women's self-meanings and identities. The reappearance of the body to the participants' self-awareness is discussed as central to how imprisonment contributes to the making of *ambivalent* (Bauman 1991)

prisoner and ex-prisoner self-identities. This part of the chapter is brief, as the effect of the changing body on women's self-identity is a theme that I return to in Chapter 6.

### **5.1 Contextualising the embodiment of imprisonment**

#### ***Harmed bodies before prison***

Although my participants' backgrounds varied in terms of demographics, it appeared that they all entered prison in what Hayley describes for herself as '*a bad state*'. A 'bad state' referred to drug and alcohol addictions, serious mental health issues, lack of accommodation, traumatic experiences of abuse and attempts to escape violent partners or family members, or, as in the case of Gemma, a prison sentence came after a suicide attempt and the shocking experience of verbal abuse from police officers. Other participants explained that their 'bad states' before prison were a serious burden on their lives and sense of self. Their bodies served as a site of their painful experiences and a visual representation of their mental state. Laura explained that her experiences led to self-loathing and constant attempts to demean and punish herself which meant that going to prison confirmed her view of her already damaged, self-mutilated and suffering body.

Goffman's (1968: 12) analysis of 'spoilt identity' explains that individuals who are socially stigmatised, either for failing to perform in a certain way or for participating in 'deviant' behaviours, experience a sense of fracture from their self-identities because they 'tend to hold the same beliefs about identity that we do' (Goffman 1968: 17-18). For example, Laura's socially constituted identity was, in essence, expressing her self-hatred and punitiveness, an attitude that she constructed and received from her social environment. Inmates, Goffman (1963) argues tend to categorise themselves in similar terms as others see them: 'inmates tend in some ways at least, to feel inferior, weak, blameworthy and guilty' (1963: 18).

Such histories of internalised stigma were also relevant to the traumatic experiences women endured prior to their imprisonment. Berta, for example, wanted to clarify the significance of her 'imported characteristics' <sup>50</sup>(Kruttschnitt et. al 2000) to her overall prison

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<sup>50</sup> This is the opposing theory to the "deprivation" model, which focuses on the degree to which inmates can adjust to the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958; Sykes and Messinger, 1960). Criticism of this model produced a number of competing paradigms (see Kruttschnitt and Gartner, 2005), the most notable among these was the *importation model* (Irwin and Cressey, 1962). The importation model focuses on the imported characteristics of inmates *before* their prison experience and argues that these unique individual characteristics have an impact on the ways in which inmates adapt and cope with imprisonment. These characteristics include demographic and individual factors such as age, ethnicity and education as well as previous convictions and family life, socio-economic background and experience of trauma and abuse (Slotboom et al. 2011).

experience. She felt that her view of the prison as a 'safe home' would be better understood if I gathered a clearer idea of what it meant to be a drug addict and carry the past that she has:

Don't get me wrong. I don't think jail makes you feel better about yourself or your appearance. I just think that if you got a raging drug habit before you go in, you are not looking after yourself, you don't care what you look like, so I don't think jail gives you something you didn't have before, it just gives it *back* to you. So when you go into jail, you get clean and you stop using, and then yeah, you start looking after yourself, you see your body coming back ... and you like it. (Berta)

She described getting back her body as a symbol of regained health and femininity. The apathy and numbness she felt as an addict denied her a social body, responsive to social norms and expectations. In explaining that prison gave her the opportunity to reclaim her body, Berta depicted imprisonment as a rehabilitative experience that liberated her from the confinement of an addicted, pained body. She explained that she understood that prison is intended to be punitive but, because of her past experiences, prison was not perceived as a punitive space for her:

Punishment? No, definitely not. Especially when you got your own cell, you got a shower. So yeah, I do believe, a lot of women are better off in prison. They are not getting battered by men, they are not selling their bodies, and they are not out there, in the streets alone. So even though they moan when they are in there, I think they are happier in there. Which is sad really. (Berta)

Berta's focus on the women's imported characteristics illustrates the prison's unfulfilled aim: if it aims to punish women, it ought to acknowledge that it is dealing with women who have routinely suffered severe deprivations and punishments, and who are, therefore, in some regards immune or resilient to the punishment of confinement. This is not to say that prison is insufficiently harsh, or that all women prisoners fail to experience the punitive effects of their lost liberty. Rather, it is to suggest, that the socio-economic, mental and physical condition of imprisoned women is such that they are not typically in need of further punishment.

The diverse experiences of social injustice that the participants endured before entering prison become their uniting factor. Not all were addicts, and not all were homeless, but the entire group entered prison in a physically and/or mentally 'bad state'. They all committed crime partly due to this 'bad state'; thus their crimes were a result of several other violations they bear. This calls for concern, especially for those women who find that prison is their only source of access to care and a home. Assessing the state of these women's bodies and health before entering prison, it becomes clear that their offending

behaviour (especially as for most of these women this refers to non-violent crimes<sup>51</sup>) should take on a secondary role in comparison to their needs and civil entitlements. The argument that these women should not be treated by the Criminal Justice System was advanced in the Corston report (2007) which, despite its enthusiastic reception, has not been fully implemented.

### ***Post-prison: Pains carried on after release***

As the participants contextualised their prison experiences in relation to their pasts, they also contextualised their imprisonment in relation to life after release from custody. They all suggested that imprisonment has a lasting effect on women's embodied sense of self which persists after their release from prison. It could be argued that the effects of imprisonment affect women's decisions, lifestyles and pathways after imprisonment and determine their social status and future opportunities. Although many women prisoners serve only short prison sentences, these have several detrimental implications, particularly due to the prison's symbolic function in labelling and 'othering' its inmates. The thesis suggests that with a focus on prisoners' embodied identities we can observe how many of the pains of imprisonment scar women's self-perception long after their release from prison.

For example, the participants explained that after release the stigma of imprisonment perpetuated their sense of isolation and purposelessness, by limiting, in particular, their employment opportunities:

But personally, I think it is just as bad when you get out, because of the lack of job. It's just so frustrating. And it's so upsetting, because I know I would have had a job ages ago if I hadn't gone to prison. A lot of people say it's hard when you get out, and when I got out, I went to a hostel for 2 weeks, which was really horrible, and while in prison they tell you after the 2 weeks, they are going to do all these thing to help you, but then it gets to the end of the 2 weeks and you are on your own.  
(Pauline)

The women argued that their sense of vulnerability was also perpetuated after their release from prison. As a number of them explained, the lack of support post-release meant that the positive outcomes of imprisonment were not preserved and their perpetuated sense of helplessness often left them to perceive no other choice but to return to crime soon after their release.

[...] but soon after [prison] I didn't feel I had achieved something because there was no support to maintain that [outside]. After prison there is a major lack of support, especially about your wellbeing. Because while you are in [prison], OK if you have nothing else to do and want to, you can go to the gym, you can get different types of

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<sup>51</sup> In 2011 62.1% of women prisoners were sentenced for a non-violent offence. 27% of women sentenced to imprisonment had no previous convictions and almost half of the women who enter prison every year are remand prisoners (Ministry of Justice 2012a).

meals, but when you are out, like with the drugs, you are back to your old routine, and if you want to have kit-kats for breakfast, lunch and dinner, nobody will stop you. So even if you did everything right in prison... you will still go out to your old routine...and there's nobody to help you. Same with the drugs, you can get clean while you are in there, but as soon as you are back to the same area, the same house, the same people, you are likely to get back into a habit... I think the positive about being in [prison] is that you are confined in a protected bubble, you can do good things in there, the problem is, the lack of support after, that's what messes it all up. (Eve)

A combination therefore of women's perpetuated sense of vulnerability and their continuous stigmatisation and exclusion post-release, means that often, their punishment carries on, limiting their bodies and identities and confining their potential and opportunities beyond imprisonment.

## **5.2 Particular experiences of imprisonment: How does the body change in prison?**

### ***Revival of the senses: Feeling prison space and "doing time"***

The senses are the main corporeal means through which one perceives and experiences the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962) and, therefore, are an integral element of the interpretation of the experience of imprisonment. They are the very details of not only what prison is like, but what it *feels* like for women prisoners. Arguably, elements of lived experience, such as those derived from the senses, 'dissolve boundaries between bodies' and bring together, 'homogenize' and 'synchronize' the prison experience (Cunha 2012: 4). The senses, however, are modes of perception that rely on subjective interpretations: this means they vary from person to person and draw a rather diverse picture of imprisonment.

The subjective sense of time passing in prison, along with the body's awareness of the multi-dimensional space it occupies, are two of the body's senses that are discussed extensively throughout this thesis in relation to other aspects of embodiment and emotions. Following the work of Heidegger (1962) and Leder (2004), these two aspects of embodiment are considered central sensations that define the perception of the prison experience and significantly affect the ways prison is lived. Similarly, criminologists have considered the concept of "doing time" and living in "prison space" (e.g. Cohen and Taylor 1972; Wahidin 2002; 2004; Deaton et al. 2009; Jewkes 2012b). For example, existing research considers experiences of "doing time" and ageing (Wahidin and Tate 2005), or coping with prison time (Cohen and Taylor 1972) and establishes that these are admittedly important elements of the custodial experience. Moreover, specific locations of the prison and its unique architecture can reveal significant clues about how prison space is lived and



how it connects with spaces outside its physical boundaries (Moran 2013b). Existing research however, has not focused on the embodied nature of such experiences (for an exception see Moran 2013a) and how these connect with other perceptive elements of the prison experience. As suggested here, the senses of time and space affect all other sensuous dimensions of the experience of imprisonment. Thus, the impact of time and space on the prisoner's reflexive awareness is discussed here in *relation* to other, less discussed, sensorial aspects of the prison experience.

*(Im)mobility, bodily inspection and the margins of the body*

The regulation of space and of the movement of prisoner bodies in prison is achieved through security technology which is used to prevent escapes, collective riots and individual acts of aggression or self-injury. Although the prison is a structure that is situated within another geographical space (i.e. a town), it is, nevertheless, self-contained and partly impermeable, not only for the prisoners but also for outsiders. Prisoners are regularly searched, including Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) checks and other regular body and cell searches, in a process whereby their bodies are treated as objects of observation and control.<sup>52</sup> Coupled with similar objectification from medical staff, the participants suggested that there were times when they felt a desire to be 'separated' from their bodies, which they felt no longer belonged to them, illustrating what Wahidin (2002: 177) described as the body of the prisoner becoming 'public property'.

The power of the prison over the prisoner's body was discussed by some participants in regard to the regulation of their mobility in the prison.

It's a really basic sort of feeling of punishment to be honest; it comes in feeling completely isolated. They tell you there are people you can talk to about [your problems], but not really. Because for one thing, you can't freely walk around and go in and say 'I want to talk to somebody'. And people don't actually walk up to you and ask you 'are you alright?' (Laura)

By locking you up a few hours a day, you are allowed outside on specific times. That's the first thing. It's that you are like an animal, caged, you are only let outside for a short period of time everyday and that's in a small space, so yeah *that's* the punishment. (Anna)

Sometimes I would walk outside making circles around the yard; I'd close my eyes and pretend I was actually *going* somewhere (Regina)

The act of walking usually involves moving in space in a certain direction. Being contained in a small space however, participants felt that their mobility was not only regulated in prison, but in some cases it was stopped altogether as they had no freedom to adopt a

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<sup>52</sup> Strip-searching has officially been abolished after the Corston Report (2007).

direction. Thus, a sense of purposelessness is described through these examples of compromised mobility. Participants who had been in both an open and a closed prison acknowledged that movement within the open prison space was less regulated, in the sense that it was not monitored and restrained through locks and gates, but it was still regulated through timetables. Denise, for example, explained that there were always 'little jobs' one had to do and places one had to be at certain times of the day, which meant that the prisoner was never free to choose the direction or the purpose of her movement. Many participants remarked that although the use of the gym was optional, they rarely chose to go to the gym. They did, however, choose to walk within allowed locations, particularly outdoors, for 'exercise' or to 'get some air'. As Regina suggests above, the attempt to maintain a sense of motion was used as a form of coping. Elements of imagination are employed by Regina to transcend the prison space by leaving her contained body in a process of disembodiment, achieved through conscious bodily activity.

#### *Fear of bodily integrity and security*

The need to protect their bodily integrity from interaction and association with inmates and members of staff generated feelings of fear among the women. This is a common issue discussed widely in the literature and one of the points raised by Sykes' (1958) seminal study on the 'pains of imprisonment'. Some participants expressed a general sense of fear regarding their bodily security while in prison, explaining that the inmate hierarchy and the threatening and aggressive behaviour of some prisoners meant that they had to make continuous and consistent efforts to avoid contact with inmates who they considered dangerous. This also meant that they would routinely avoid associating in public spaces and spent much of their time in their cells. This sense of fear, therefore, made their experience of daily life in prison one of considerable anxiety, stress and isolation.

If you are in a group, you feel less threatened by other people, it didn't really kick off outside because people wanted to stay outside, but it did in the wing [...] I used to play pool at first, but then you get tension, you'd get stares and whispering here and there, so I decided to just go to someone's room during recreation instead ... and that's how you withdraw yourself. (Laura)

Being in there, it scared me senseless. It was other people, it was just scary. You hear stories from others about why they are in jail and I felt very different from them. And I was looked at as being different. People were very surprised that I was there. They spotted the difference in the way I spoke, dressed, and behaved. I didn't associate with anyone while I was there. (Gemma)

You have to be 'street wise' to survive prison. Because I was in the streets for years I knew what to do and what not to do. Whereas, someone who didn't, would get eaten alive [laughs]. It's a case of knowing who not to piss off, and I know my strengths and weaknesses, I knew I could hang out with some and not others. It's

like school, you need to congregate and have a group, jail's like school but a lot scarier [...] and of course, you don't 'grass'. I remember this girl once went to just ask an officer something, and later they attacked her thinking she told him about our hiding drugs. Associating too much with the officers is seen as a bad sign. (Regina)

The inmate hierarchy acted as an important measure of each woman's status in prison which also determined her opportunities for socialisation. Those women who had a longer prison history were usually more adept at dealing with such fears. Less experienced prisoners resorted to being more isolated or strategically infiltrating groups that would keep them safe. The idea of protecting the self through engagement with groups during association time reflects the need to avoid appearing physically vulnerable and isolated. As Regina also explains, there are inmate rules that need to be respected, and which in so doing, could further cause anxiety. Other participants also mentioned that they had often considered asking officers for help in coping with emotional issues, but as the only time they could do this was during recreation, they felt too intimidated to approach staff in front of other inmates.

Furthermore, some participants remarked that one of the most treasured aspects of their lives after leaving prison was not just the freedom to move from place to place without permission, but also the privacy and bodily integrity they regained after their release.

Although I guess in prison you learn to undress in front of everyone and you know, do everything together, it never feels entirely OK. I remember the first few weeks I was in, I couldn't go to the bathroom, I was so self-conscious, you know? It just wasn't comfortable. I developed IBS in prison [...] now [after prison] you sort of feel you got [privacy] back; you can do things on your own. At the beginning [after release] I would still turn around and check if anyone was looking [in the bathroom]. You sort of get used to having to check. (Katherine)

Reintegrating back into a private space made the participants aware of the details that make up a "free" life. Institutionalisation, the embodied experience of constant monitoring and the requirement of permission to move from one prison space to the next – a central element of the Panoptican prison as discussed by Foucault (1979) – disciplined women's bodies to engage in constant self-surveillance and to feel "watched" even after release. Magda, for example, mentioned that after release she is 'constantly telling [her] mum where [she's] going and what [she's] doing' while Natalie remarked on being 'frightened' by the sound of police sirens in the street.

### *Noise*

According to the participants, their sensitivity to sounds once imprisoned became highly attuned. Noise is a constant feature of imprisonment that extends throughout the day

and ranges from the sounds of other inmates to the sounds made by prison staff and movement in space. Many of the interview participants explained that sleeping was problematic during the first few weeks of their sentence, in part because they were experiencing the emotional shock of incarceration and isolation and because prison is an exceptionally loud place. Because this is a shared space, women's sleep is often compromised by other prisoners' crying and yelling, or by the noise from audio-visual equipment. Sound is also derived from staff moving and talking, announcements made over speakers, walkie-talkie noise and the sound of prison keys.

When I first went in, I was completely gobsmacked [...] it took a while to sink in really. The first prison I was sent to was proper HMP, old, stuffy, everything was metal. Metal bars, metal doors, keys jangling all night, keeping you up all night; and they put you in this block for people who just got in, and that was quite upsetting. I can only remember crying once or twice, but the noise from everybody else crying or screaming was constant. It really affected me, I will never forget when I first walked in, it felt very surreal, you don't realise it's happening to you. (Gemma)

The embodied awareness the prisoner attains once incarcerated is an aspect of her identity that is likely to persist even after imprisonment. Thus, like Moran's (2012) research participants, the participants in this study also compared the noisiness of prison space with the silence they experience after release. Eve mentioned having to sleep with the TV on because she could no longer sleep without background noise, while Fiona explained that for the first couple of months after her release she had to spend as much time as possible outside because the absence of others in her house felt unfamiliar and 'too quiet'.

Noises, along with odours, were contextualised in relation to both prison spaces and to the passage of time, but they were also associated with mobility and proximity between bodies. Erika for example, mentioned feeling very tired and sleepy for the first few weeks after release because she felt that everything outside was moving 'much faster' and 'too much was happening at once'. By comparing the different way in which her experience of time was sensed in prison and outside, she was also referring to the more complex and multi-layered sensorial dimensions that her perception attained after experiencing imprisonment.

### *Odours*

While the various odours experienced in prison was a common topic of discussion among the participants, their perspective on this varied. Like their perception of other sensorial experiences, these rely on changing social relations. Participants who did not consider themselves "typical" prisoners, differentiating themselves from other prisoners in regard to their backgrounds or imported characteristics, expressed a more distinguished awareness of the various odours of prisons and remarked on them with negative

connotations. Other participants who had a longer prison history and who were more accustomed to its institutional elements, talked in more general terms, describing prison smells as endemic of the prison space and not necessarily of the bodies that make up the space.

More broadly, however, prison establishments were said to smell like ‘leftover food’ (Anna), ‘frying oil and old food’ (Hayley); in the morning they smelled of porridge and in the afternoon of ‘battered fish’ (Natasha); they also smelled of gardening and soil in the summer, and dampness and mould in the winter, but it always felt sort of ‘stuffy’ (Berta). All of the participants also mentioned how prisons smelled of ‘bleach’, ‘chlorine’ and of disinfectants, particularly in the showers, which although reassuring in terms of hygiene, left an uncomfortable, inhospitable sensation. Katherine explained how prison did not smell of anything ‘familiar’, referring to the prison’s odours as ‘impersonal’, and remarked that it was through the wing’s odours that she first realised that prison did not feel like ‘home’:

It’s not that it smelled bad, you know? It actually smelled quite clean, but it was so strange and unfamiliar. It wasn’t like any place I’ve been to before. It smelled like hospital sometimes, you know that impersonal sort of feeling, a bit sickening? It smelled nothing like home, you know when you walk in the door and smell your house? [...] Even my cell wouldn’t smell like that ... after some time it would have the smell of me, but it didn’t feel like me, it wasn’t the smell I wanted it to have. You sort of felt it was a temporary place, it wasn’t air you wanted to breathe for long. (Katherine)

In this case, the participant’s sense of confinement was experienced through her sense of smell, along with its relation to the prison space and the temporary time she was there. Prison odours denoted not only the institutional and unfamiliar environment they represented, but were also assigned a temporal dimension by the prisoners. They thus acknowledged that with the passage of time, the space of the prison (especially their own cell) was more inscribed and owned by the body. However, the lack of emotional connection with the space also denoted that the odours left an uncomfortable feeling that was dealt with only by their reminding themselves that these circumstances were temporary and did not extend too far into their futures. In the last part of her passage, Katherine explains how her confinement within “prison air” felt suffocating, alluding to the confining dimension of not only prison buildings but also the overall atmosphere of the prison.

Prisoner questionnaire respondents also referred to the odours of other inmates, emphasising how the prison space is constituted by the bodies that live within it. For example, Q-Kassandra referred to the uncomfortable smells of ‘dirty’ inmates, and Q-Benita wrote that she could ‘tell’ who did not shower regularly. Q-Lilly mentioned prisoners’ sweat

during drug withdrawal and how this was ‘a problem’, while other questionnaire participants complained about not being able to use ‘perfume’ in prison. This was described as an element that severely limited their sense of individuality and differentiation from the rest, but it also implied their self-consciousness about bodily odours. Those participants critical of drug-addicted prisoners tended to differentiate themselves from them in terms of odours, describing their withdrawal in relation to ‘prison air’:

You know, they got all those girls detoxing in there, they look and act like ... I was like that too. And the smell, you know they vomit, they sweat out the drugs, and they are a mess. So yeah, especially in the detox wing, you really smell the sickness. (Alicia)

It was apparent from the interviews that certain prison spaces were ascribed particular odours. Communal spaces usually smelled of either disinfectants or food, while specific locations like the health services unit or the gym carried the odours of prisoners’ bodies more prominently.

Katherine, who was one of the few who visited the gym during her imprisonment, remarked that although the changing rooms were quite clean, inside the gym it could get ‘quite stuffy’ although it was never busy. There were however, participants who did not refer to these bodily odours in entirely negative terms:

Especially in spring and summer, we would work out in the garden, I used to love that ... it was good to feel productive like that, to create something [...] Yeah we’d sweat a lot, but so what? It was just us – women – it didn’t feel wrong. (Berta)

Collective experiences of embodied action and shared bodily functions allowed some of the participants to feel connected with each other and the activities they engaged with provided a consoling effect. The memory of certain senses, therefore, was not always ascribed with negative feelings about the prison. It appeared that during collective and purposeful activity, imprisonment did not feel as punitive as it felt during isolating moments of disease/detoxification and during the slow passage of time in moments of idleness.

### ***Physical changes and the body’s position in space-time relations***

Having considered how prison was felt through a conscious use of the senses, this section turns to a review of participants’ responses on specific physical changes they experienced which challenged their self-identities. This section focuses on biological changes such as ageing and menstruation that make women’s experience of imprisonment unique. All of the biological changes discussed highlight the interactive nature of lived experience, connecting the participants’ prison experiences with their broader biographies.

### *Ageing and doing time*

A prison sentence inevitably takes time away from an individual's life and positions her in an incapacitated space. Thus, the concept of ageing is highly relevant in understanding the lived experience of spending time in prison. It has been demonstrated by other researchers that the experience of imprisonment is particularly harsh for women, because their time in prison means being away from their children and families, but it can also mean taking away some women's most reproductive years (Walker and Worrall 2000; Rowe 2011). Thus, regardless of the time a woman has spent in prison, this experience can significantly affect her future as well as her present opportunities to engage in social life as a parent. This aspect of imprisonment was certainly confirmed by interview participants who had either lost their children due to imprisonment or lost the opportunity for parenthood. Eve for example, expressed remorse at the lost opportunity to create a family. Moreover, because most women offenders are relatively young, spending long periods in custody can compromise the chances they may have to engage in public life (e.g. through job opportunities).

The experience of growing old in prison and the embodied experience of ageing in prison has proliferated in recent research (Moran 2012; Deaton et al. 2009; Wahidin and Tate 2005; Wahidin 2004). Wahidin (2004), for instance, considers the concept of "doing time" from a bodily-aware perspective to evaluate how imprisonment affects experiences of ageing among women. As explained in Wahidin and Tate (2005:61), such evaluations 'make the experiences of elders under the penal gaze central' because they demonstrate, 'how ageist and gendered typifications of femininity operate'. Such research focuses on the relationship between subjective experiences of temporality and living within prison space and highlights the emotional impact that the visibility of ageing skin and bodies has on women.

Although the concept of ageing was also relevant in this thesis, the sample did not include many older participants. Most of them were relatively young and had spent only short periods in custody. Some interviewees talked about ageing through examples of strategies that they employed to change their appearance in order to look more "mature" or less "criminal" (see Chapter 6). Overall, it appeared that perceptions around bodily change and ageing depended partly on class backgrounds. The women who were most impoverished and socially excluded appeared to have more anxieties about the consequences of ageing, whilst those with more access to beauty products and clothing experienced higher levels of control and felt more confident, as did those who had positive older role models.

Nevertheless, questionnaire participants displayed more concern with regard to ageing than the interview participants. Some explained that the ‘pains of imprisonment’ were directly visible through their ageing bodies and flesh. This experience of feeling and seeing one’s body age inside prison was described in relation to a sense of personal “loss”. The participants talked about losing their youth, their sexual appeal and their health as a reflection of a broader loss of freedom and individuality. As participant Q-Nadia explained, ‘time passes too slowly in prison’, but the effects of time in prison are ‘very quickly visible’ on the prisoner’s body:

You are not doing much in here, so you have time to notice what time’s done to you. You get old in prison before your time. For me it was the drugs [I used before], but prison [too]. [It] takes life out of you. (Q-Nadia)

[Prison] is a very stressful place, so it makes you old. Your skin is old, your hair is grey, and your energy’s gone. You know what time you’ve done in jail by just looking at yourself in the mirror. (Q-Agnes)

The questionnaire and interview participants that talked about ageing were relatively older than the overall sample, being usually in their late twenties or thirties.

Some interview participants talked about growing older in prison as a process of ‘maturing’, whereby their vitality and risk-taking youth is replaced by a numb and pessimistic approach towards the future. One interview participant explained this process of growing-up as a process whereby she learnt to conform to her gender role by avoiding aggressive behaviour:

It was mainly that [prison] pushed me to be a different girl. I used to be a lot more violent. And the fear of getting locked up again stopped me from going out to fight. I used to be an angry person. But that means I also used to be a lot more confident. I used to not care what others thought or of going to prison. I was more independent with the fighting I guess. I wouldn’t care what I said or to who ... Now, I’m a lot calmer ... I sort of have to regulate myself now. (Olga)

Growing older in prison, therefore, entailed a process of socialisation, particularly for younger women, whereby the punishment they experienced inside prison acted as a motivation to conform and comply with accepted social norms. Some of the younger interview participants referred to how imprisonment put a stop to their youth and all the opportunities that come with it, and forced them to ‘grow up’ too fast (Magda). This process of ‘growing up’ to conform to accepted norms resonates with the feminising and domesticating elements observed by researchers in women’s prisons (e.g. Carlen 1983; 1998).



## *Menstruation*

The participants referred to aspects of their health and female body with a collective sense of understanding that went beyond the medical objectification of their bodies. This allowed them a point of empathy and connection with each other during imprisonment. For example, although the participants tended to share, broadly speaking, a sense of unpleasantness and distress while menstruating in prison (see also Smith 2009), these negative feelings were not necessarily attached to the actual event of menstruation, but rather to the fact they often had to resort to the medical services for help, or felt pain and discomfort. Unlike Smith's (2009) participants, the women in this study, a large number of whom suffered from drug addictions and had not menstruated for a long time before imprisonment, experienced its re-appearance as a welcome event and a symbol of their bodily well-being.

Menstrual blood was seen as the sign of normal biological event that although it made "doing time" even more burdensome and painful at times, also signalled the passage of time from a stage of "ill health" to one of "health" and well-being. As women are often imprisoned during their most fertile years, the appearance of menstrual blood every month acted as a 'check' that 'it still wasn't too late' (Gemma), and that the passing of prison time did not take over the female body entirely. On other occasions, menstruation meant that the drugs many women were addicted to before prison 'were wearing off' (Berta) which meant that detoxification was finally having a positive effect.

Furthermore, the commonality of this experience among women in prison, allowed for a "bonding experience" among them, alluding to a shared and collective appreciation of their embodiment. The participants explained that women tended to support each other during menstruation instead of emotionally suppressing this bodily experience into private suffering.

When you are out you want it to come to make sure you are not pregnant, you just want to make sure and get it over with. In prison you want it to come to make sure that you can *still* get pregnant when you get out. You sort of switch your priorities. (Erika)

Nothing can be kept a secret in prison; everybody knows what everyone else is doing. So you can't keep [menstruations] private in prison. I mean, we'd try to hide it and be careful and all, you don't advertise it, but everybody knows. It's like you *feel* it's there or something, it's the moods that go with it too, so at least the people who associate with you always know ... we'd try to make it easier for each other, like not get on each other's nerves, leave each other alone to go to sleep or whatever. (Olga)

When a few of us are on at the same time [it can be] quite comforting. We try helping each other. [But] it can get quite tense [as well], if everyone is snappy and angry we know everyone is on at the same time [so try] to keep to ourselves. (Q-Benita)

As the participants describe, although the experience of periods in prison entailed many discomforts and was blamed for changes in women's moods, the prisoners tended to bond through this shared experience.

Menstruation, however, could also be the cause of severe pain and was used by some participants as a metaphor for the way their bodies were dealing with imprisonment and its painful effects on their embodied selves.

Because of the drugs I didn't have periods before. So in prison I got my period for the first time in 8 years, it was good to see it, but it was horrible really. I had lots of clots and ever since, it would come on every 2 weeks. I knew something's wrong, I felt horrible pain, it kept me up at night in prison. So I went to the doctor and he said it was nothing, I don't know, hope he's right. (Berta)

Many girls in [prison] complain about the moods and the cramps, because, they can't just get up and go get a pill for it. But mine hasn't come in months; it just stopped the second or third month I went to jail. I just hope it's not for ever. (Hayley)

The traumatic events of trial and imprisonment have proved to be sufficiently severe to stop or change the rhythm of women's menstrual cycles (Smith 2009). The passage of time in prison, however, can contribute to additional stress among women prisoners in regard to their health status. Although the sample of this study did not cover older prisoners, it was nevertheless obvious that women were anxious about biological changes that could occur to their bodies both due to imprisonment and the passage of long periods of time away from the normal social world (see Wahidin and Tate 2005).

### ***Detoxification from addictions and "doing health" by doing time***

Catrin Smith's (2000; 2002) research in the field of health and women's imprisonment challenges the prison's paradoxical ambition to provide both punishment and care to its prisoners. With the imposing phrase 'health in prison is a contradiction in terms', Smith (2000:339) argues that health promotion in this environment can have detrimental effects on its prisoners/patients. Her conclusions are confirmed on many levels by the findings of this thesis. However, in studying women prisoners as a unique group which has endured different experiences and whose backgrounds deviate significantly from the "average" woman's health status (Plugge et al. 2006), it is suggested here that some women's experience of imprisonment did have "healthy" outcomes. For instance, the prison's rehabilitative elements were certainly a central topic of discussion among all of the

ex-addict participants. Thus, studying this field from the perspective of ex-prisoners who contextualised prison within their broader life narratives, brings a new perspective to the enduring impact of imprisonment on women. Moreover, the prison's positive impact on some participants' health denotes precisely that the circumstances of women who enter prison are devastating.

Consistent with its reformatory ambitions, the prison promotes and offers opportunities for "health". The findings of this thesis indicate that prison still maintains a rehabilitative character in the ways it treats women prisoners, although the 'needs' (Corston 2007) of women are not necessarily responded to as welfare 'needs', but as potential risk factors to be corrected in order to avoid further offending (Hannah-Moffat 2001; 2004). Similarly to medical health programmes in the community, the aim of prison health-care is to produce "normal" bodies of women. The needs that are addressed in prison represent a conviction that ill and deviant female bodies form part of the answer to why women offend. On the one hand, this places individual responsibility for women's health and renders them "saveable" via the criminal justice system; on the other, it acknowledges the socio-economic causes of women's offending (Carlen 1998). However, on another level, this suggests that prison is not necessarily used for those offenders whose deeds deserve custodial punishment, but for "troubled girls" for whom prison is deemed an appropriate place (Hedderman and Gelsthorpe 1997; Gelsthorpe 2006).

#### *Past experiences affecting health attitudes in prison*

The prisoners who found prison to be a healthy environment deviated significantly from the stereotypical "normal" woman<sup>53</sup> (Terry and Urla 1995), by having histories of either addiction or homelessness and in some cases, by enduring a lifestyle characterised by ill health and deprivation. The meaning attached to various bodily changes occurring in prison was reported *in relation* to how women felt *before* prison:

[...] I had injections every day before, I had blood clotting, I had bad asthma, before I went to jail, I was ill, I was fitting. Physically and mentally, I was very ill. But in jail, I was on medication, I was calmer, so, I guess, I was healthier. (Iris)

Although the above participant suggests that she felt healthier in prison in comparison to her previous experiences, her indication of being healthy in prison is illustrated by having access to medication that made her feel "calmer", reminding us of the medicalisation of women's bodies within prison without necessarily providing any holistic sense of well-being (Carlen

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<sup>53</sup> The "normal" woman is, of course, a fictional ideal of the woman following gender and class norms as inscribed in our society.

1998). Arguably, bodily reformation often takes place through a combination of medical and penal measures which pathologise rather than empower the process of rehabilitation.

However, some women do become “healthier” in prison and as a result they start to feel better about themselves through a more positive body-image which appears to assist them in coping with personal problems and getting through their sentence.

Your body *changes* ... it gets better so you feel better. When I’m on drugs I don’t care, when I am off the drugs, I like to look good, I actually start looking at myself in the mirror and [I] will look and say ‘oh, you look nice today’ and it does help, it gets easier. (Fiona)

As Fiona explains, the transformation that the female body undergoes during imprisonment is often embraced as a fresh start. This is especially the case for the transformed, drug-free body. What the above quote also seems to denote is that once this transformation does take place, the body assumes a new role in the prisoners’ self-identity and can affect a higher self-esteem. This reconnection between self and body also alludes to the body’s *social* function. In becoming bodily aware in prison, the prisoner starts to look at her body’s function in presenting her identity and feelings (see Chapter 6). There is, therefore, almost a simultaneous connection between the body becoming rehabilitated and the prisoner feeling more socially adept and confident. Agreeing with Leder’s (1990) argument that the body “re-appears” or attains a new significance during extreme experiences of distress, I suggest that this reappearance of the body does not leave or disappear once the body is no longer in pain.

But what is being emphasised here is that the body attains a new significance in settings, spaces and circumstances that are particularly punitive, painful and confining. Under such circumstances, bodily awareness takes place mostly in a vengeful and painful manner, constituting a state of embodied ‘*dys-appearance*’, or a bodily awareness that is associated with negative emotions and sensations (Leder 1990; see Chapter 2). However, seeing that the experiences and bodies of women who go to prison are often harmed before their imprisonment, this state of bodily re-appearance promotes a more complex combination of emotions that are not always entirely negative or consistent. These processes of improvement and increased bodily awareness can allow the individual a more positive emotional outlook. The late-modern idea of the body as a project (Shilling 2003) can, therefore, be said to take on a reverse role inside prison. Unlike outside, using the body as a project for improvement and enhancement in prison can be a therapeutic experience where the self re-connects with her life narrative and begins to enjoy certain aspects of life through

bodily changes. In the case of ex-addicts, this is particularly noticeable through the resurgence of the body's appetites:

You go into prison and you are all drained, you have horrible, spotty skin, you are so skinny, then you start eating and then you actually get to a point where you *feel* hungry. It's an amazing feeling actually. Whereas, before, eating wasn't important. (Regina)

Appetite, along with the biological need to feed the body, are key aspects of our embodiment: the retrieval of appetite during drug detoxification is experienced as an indication of the body's resurgence and what many of the participants defined as the potential for making a "fresh start".

### *Autonomy as health?*

Having said this, the participants who discussed their experience of drug and alcohol rehabilitation in prison did not necessarily believe that prison was responsible for their present recovery. Rather, they suggest it was due to their own individual decision-making or motivation that enabled them to tackle their substance misuse. This was most often reflected in the context of a general critique of the types of methadone treatment offered in prisons and the lack of support available:

Berta: Believe it or not, when I was in jail, I was using a lot of methadone; the only time I started to detoxify my body was when I came out of jail. Ain't that mad?

Anna: It's because they tell you to go *up* on your methadone, they don't *ask* you what you want to do ...

Berta: They keep the level up and get you through your sentence *quietly*. They don't care about getting girls off their methadone and getting them drug free. So [throughout] my whole sentence, I was on the same dose, and really, because of the length of my sentence, I should have gone in there and gotten detoxed out with no methadone habit. But I came out with a methadone habit.

Anna: They've got a whole jail of women trying to get off heroin, they've got their names on the books and they leave them to it. They get them on a methadone script where they are stable and quiet and that's it. Like my drug worker, I had her for nine months and she came to see me maybe one time ... And then when you do have a problem and you go to see them, they are too busy to see you and it all gets pushed back. (Group interview; Anna and Berta)

The participants explained that the rehabilitative process they experienced was not the outcome of a successful treatment programme. Berta and other participants explained that drugs are readily accessible in prison (see Chapter 7) and, as Magda remarked, some women go into prison without an addiction and come out with a drug habit. This focus on individual effort emphasises the participants' awareness that health entails a process that engages individual choice and available opportunity together with a strong will and self-control to maintain a new, healthier lifestyle (Liebling 2011; Woodall et al. 2013). Having said this, both Anna and Berta explained that methadone treatment can often be used to the prisoners' overall rehabilitative disadvantage in order to keep them quiet and thus manageable in the

prison environment, highlighting what Sykes (1958) referred to as the deprivation of autonomy. This control strategy reflects the paradox in the prison's function to offer both care and punishment, or to serve women's individual needs within the context of risk management and the maintenance of order and security (Hannah-Moffat 2001; Smith 2000).

The same tension is also reflected in the prison's refusal to allow women to exercise decision-making over their treatment. To a degree, this reflects the generally disempowering role ascribed to all patients (i.e. the specialist gaze, see Foucault 1963; Williams and Bendelow 1998), but it is not necessarily inevitable outside prison. For prisoners, it is an objectifying experience on two levels: women are firstly stripped of their individuality and self-control as prisoners and secondly as patients.

It would appear that the tendency to "pathologise" women remains in the current "prisoncentric" (Gelsthorpe 2006) climate. The use of detoxification and psychotropic medication in prison may explain how prisons still manage to exist and 'work' (Cressey 1961: 2), implying that the aim of punishment is achievable through medical intervention in constituting the docile prisoner's body. There is, thus, an element of forced compliance (rather than legitimised consent) imposed on the prisoners, because through the use of various structural powers, the prison subdues its inhabitants through services that are not available to many of them outside.

### ***Medical care and the "pathological" body***

The majority of women who enter English prisons are more "unhealthy" than the majority of women in England (Plugge et al. 2006) and, therefore, one would expect that the primary reflection of the "healthy prison" (HMCIP 1999) model is found in the provision of health-care. This section summarises the participants' comments on health-care provision and illustrates that women's experiences as patients in prison serve as an additional pain to their penal experience. The section also highlights the gendered perspective evident in prison health-care which arguably affects women's self-perceptions.

The delivery of prison health services through the NHS was intended to provide equivalence of care with the outside community. Prison Service Order (2003) summarises the partnership between the Prison Service and the NHS as a cooperation that has:

[A] responsibility to ensure that prisoners have access to health services that are broadly equivalent to those the general public receives from the NHS. This means that prisons should already provide health education, patient education, prevention

and other health promotion interventions to meet within that general context. (PSO 2003: 1)

This same document sets out instructions to prison staff to ‘build the physical, mental and social health of prisoners’ (PSO 2003:1). Governors are instructed to make efforts to: ‘help prevent the deterioration of prisoners’ health during or because of custody, especially by building on the concept of decency in our prisons’ (PSO 2003: 1)<sup>54</sup>. The PSO (2003) also refers to the prison’s responsibility not only to offer appropriate care to those in ill-health but also to promote good health. This promotion comes with encouragement to undertake a healthier lifestyle that would help the prisoner to lead a law-abiding life after prison. It echoes the neo-liberal approach to health *as a choice* which, as sociologists of health and illness have pointed out (e.g. Moore 2010; Nettleton 1996; Bendelow 2009), has a biased and limited understanding of lifestyles, including, among other criticisms, the cost (economic and other) of choosing to be healthy (Moore 2010).

Although for many women, prison is where they are offered (often a first) chance to improve their health, it appears that health-care continues to be a subject of constant grievance among women prisoners. This view is shared by the specialist inspections of health services in prisons (HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons 2011). According to the latest inspection report on three of the largest women’s prisons in England (2010/11), the health-care administration was described as ‘chaotic’ and the appointment system as ‘unnecessarily complicated’ (HMCIP: 57). Some prisons did not have a female GP, and arrangements for breast screening procedures were ‘inadequate’ (HMCIP 2011: 58). Moreover, the communication among health-care staff and prisoners was reported as poor and slow (HMCIP 2011: 58). Administration of care was difficult to deliver as poor communication among health-care professionals, prison and pharmacy services staff was described as ‘torturous and inconsistent’ (HMCIP: 58). HMP Bronzefield for example, was criticised for not providing appropriate induction to their new dentist and commented critically on a notice in the dentist’s office stating that treatment would be offered only if the patient had experienced pain for at least three days (HMCIP: 58). According to this report, mental health services received a better rating than physical health-care. However, one of the prisons inspected appeared to have an unusually small mental health caseload, which seemed unrealistic and anomalous given the population it held.

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<sup>54</sup> The decency agenda reflects the shift in penal thinking where the “decent” treatment of prisoners through humane living conditions and treatment is thought to justify the use of imprisonment as a legitimate method of punishment so long as it is not (too) harmful (Liebling and Arnold 2004).

The interview participants touched upon similar complaints to those mentioned in the Inspectorate's report. Provision of care was undermined by the inherent contradiction in the prison's function as an institution of discipline and punishment and a provider of care and rehabilitation. The lack of real opportunities for individual decision-making in prison complicated the possibility to engage with any health-related practices that were expected of the participants.

Some of the prison staff, including the health-care people, are really ignorant and stubborn. They really are not very interested because they are convinced you are bad, so ... they just don't care, it's like they think you don't deserve better. (Magda)

Some participants expressed the view that generally prison staff did not care about their well-being and that the bureaucratic procedures depersonalised their needs and processed their complaints without taking them seriously. Coming from highly deprived backgrounds, the women's need for appropriate attention from staff often contributed to their overall lack of trust and disbelief in the prison's ability and integrity to help them to change their lifestyles. Given the women's personal histories, the lack of a sympathetic and caring environment in prison can trigger additional feelings of exclusion, depression and anxiety that add to the 'pains of imprisonment' (see Chapter 7). Therefore, on the one hand, the focus on health and detoxification in prison refocuses the attention of women on their bodies, and invites the prisoner to start thinking of herself and lifestyle in embodied ways that often result in positive health outcomes; on the other, the medicalising focus, along with the paradoxical combination of care and punishment, combine to exacerbate these women's painful experience of the prison and further scar their self-esteem and body-image.

In particular, a common grievance among the participants was the complexity and bureaucratic nature of the medical services in prisons, a point also observed by the HM Inspector of Prisons (2011).

These girls in jail, some of them have cancer and serious problems, like heart and bone problems, some need surgery, and they are on the waiting list for months and months ... just to see a proper doctor. It's disgraceful; the medical service in jail is not just bad [pause] it's just not really there, especially for those who mostly need it. [...] Most of the time in prison we spent it doing nothing, but for things like medical care, there's never enough time. (Pauline)

I've tried many times to go see somebody for some problems I've had after giving birth ... but apparently you have to be in a long time to get seen by somebody, because you see, everything in there is application, application, application, for everything. I've put in one for the dentist too, because they advertised getting faster service than outside or something like that. But my turn never came; everything takes a long, very long time in prison. (Tanya)

The lengthy application procedures involved in booking doctor and other medical appointments are incompatible with the relatively short sentences most women serve in



prison. This resulted in incomplete medical examinations and a general unwillingness by the women to bother with health services unless it was absolutely necessary. Arguably, this attitude is contrary to the ambition of addressing women's health needs within prison.

### *Doing health and self-meanings*

The evaluation of health-care services in prison stemmed from a reflection of the participants' wider understanding of health and well-being as crucial concepts in their self-perceptions and life narratives. The participants approached the theme of practising health and being healthy in prison with a profound reflection on the very concept of "health". As ex-prisoners, many participants offered not only recollections of their prison experience, but their views on health were also based on a *comparison* of their well-being and bodily experiences after imprisonment. This comparative element allowed for a fresh approach to the provision of health-care in prison and its lasting impact:

I feel healthier now [out of prison], not out of purpose, I'm just trying to live life again without regrets and I have to try to get on with it. To be healthy means *to have meaningful relationships*, friendships, I suppose to be healthy is *to be wanted*, either by a partner or a friend, to have a sense of *purpose*, therefore being healthy means *to like yourself*, to like who you are, to have self-worth, and in prison that's not easy to achieve. (Denise)

In prison you get *time*, you have the time to look at yourself, reflect and you know, ask 'why am I here?' You know, you get time to become self critical, judgmental, *that* I think was the beginning of me trying to get healthy. Because, you know, in our case getting healthy often *means changing your life*, realising you've got things wrong and trying to fix them, so in that sense, becoming healthy is the hardest thing I've ever done. (Iris)

But in prison I felt healthy, because I was clean [drug free] ... It didn't change my behaviour, but in terms of health attitude it did ... when I first went in I wanted to get out to get back on gear, as time went on, I wanted to come out to sort out my life and move on. (Erika)

The participants demonstrate that the concept of "health" entails a profound dimension of overall mental and physical well-being that is not limited to the medical conception of practising health. Denise explains health as an essential element of her *social* identity. It entails developing social bonds that give the individual a sense of purpose, worthiness and confidence. Being healthy under this perspective entails a process of self-gratification acquired from others' acceptance. Denise's self-image improved by feeling that she could perform her identity as a woman who is still (sexually) wanted, who can care for and provide for her daughter, and who could be a caring friend to others. In this case, the re-appearance of the body is reflected as a positive outcome in the long run. As the women in this study show, prison may not have inspired a healthy approach to life, due to its contradictory and repressive nature; however, the free time for reflection that imprisonment gave them was a

valuable resource in taking the decision to approach their bodies and lives differently. Explaining their understanding of health as a process of self-reflection alludes also to the interconnection between feeling healthy and embodying health.

Finally, although some participants valued the opportunity imprisonment gave them to reflect on their lifestyles and attitudes to health, many participants explained that they felt unhealthy during imprisonment due to the impact that incarceration had on their self-esteem, mental health, and general lack of motivation to put in the necessary effort:

I like to be healthy; I don't like *to not feel well*. For me, healthy means to have a bit more weight on, have my hair normal, noticed it's all falling? ... Really, it means to feel good about myself. My self-esteem isn't really low anymore, but it's not high either. When I was in prison, then, my self-esteem was really low, it made me feel awful, and then with the prostitution after prison, I hated myself even more, I couldn't stand looking at my body. (Fiona)

I feel a lot healthier now than in prison. I was low and didn't want to feed myself, so I didn't want to be healthy, I had no motivation. Now, I'm trying to change and fix things, so I'm also trying to fix my health. Just being in there, in prison, it's not healthy at all, I don't even want to visit anyone in there, it makes me sick. (Pauline)

All of the participants expressed an understanding of the need to be healthy and a willingness to change their lives towards a "healthier lifestyle", associating good health with a happier and more ethical way of life. In their recollections of incarceration, they emphasised that being healthy while in prison was a concern that continued to preoccupy them after release. These women's holistic approach to health and their overall understanding that health is essential to the transformation of their overall lifestyles reflects their understanding of the profound effort necessary to change their lives.

Many women believe that if they change their lives and become healthier, they will be more confident. Increased self-esteem seemed to be a crucial goal for all the participants, who rationalised that unless they regained a sense of self-worth they would not be able to conclusively change their lives. Finally, through women's accounts of health it was evident they felt that in changing their bodies and lives for what they conceived to be 'the better', they had to struggle individually, reflecting both a sense of self-criticism but also a lack of expectation or trust in the existence of outside support.

### **5.3 Bodily transformation as awareness: What do these changes mean for the self?**

#### ***Imprisoned bodies as absent-present bodies***

Both the interview participants and the questionnaire participants explained that their experience of imprisonment made them “notice” their bodies more than they would outside. This made them more aware of their embodiment but also of their prison life, making their prison experience noticeable *through* their bodies. This emerged from improvements to their health, but also from the prison’s pains and punishments being inscribed directly onto their bodies. Leder’s (1990) ‘*dys-appearing body*’ resonated with many of the participants’ experiences of re-embodiment in prison. The awareness of one’s embodiment in everyday life has been a contested theme within the sociology of embodiment (Williams and Bendelow 1998), however, there is agreement that awareness of the body is most likely to occur after extreme experiences of ill-health, physical pain or emotional pain (for an example see Oakley’s (2007) autobiography). All of the women in my research focused on the transformation of their bodies in prison and the ever-changing and often limiting access they had to practise self-control and informed decision-making as regards their own bodies, health and well-being. They expressed a sense of disempowerment as the varying prison structures (including medical services) directed their efforts at regulating women’s behaviours by constraining their embodied existence as active participants in their own transformation.

It should be highlighted however, that the participants also noted that their bodies did not change solely as a result of their imprisonment. In fact, many of the participants’ life narratives are associated with regular and significant bodily changes, particularly in regard to addictions developed prior to imprisonment. They describe a constant “changeability” in their appearance and bodies, reflecting an ongoing *ambivalence* and *distrust* towards their own bodies. This is an aspect of embodiment ascribed more broadly to the late-modern woman (Tyner and Ogle 2008). On the one hand, the participants experienced the decay of their bodies through varying addictions and diseases, they then endured the pains of withdrawal and imprisonment as a vengeful reminder of their embodiment, and in some instances they also experienced the power and resilience of their bodies to “get clean” and healthy. In this process, the ambivalent and changing relationship between self and body meant that coping and living prison life through the body entailed a desire also to act against the body as a means of controlling it (see Chapter 7). Although many participants at the time of the interviews were “clean” from addictions, they also expressed a cynical distrust towards their own abilities to maintain healthy bodies, believing that once afflicted it was

impossible to be fully rehabilitated<sup>55</sup> (see Section 7.2). Others said that their bodies felt ‘unreliable’, providing them with the means to progress and survive previous pains and acting, at the same time, as reminders of their abuse and harmful pasts. Thus, by considering bodily change and health transformation from an embodied perspective the complexity of women’s subjectivity in regards to their own self-perceptions can be more fully revealed.

Moreover, the observation that women’s bodies change in prison in an emotionally unsettling manner can inform our knowledge about the character of imprisonment in our late-modern ‘somatic societies’ (Turner 2008) which are said to be preoccupied with body projects (Shilling 2003; 2008) as means to control the uncertainty of our times (Giddens 1991). As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, modern anxieties and medico-technological developments have brought the body to the centre of our attention as a means of presenting and perceiving our self-identity. Consumerist focus on the “look” of the body has placed pressure on late modern individuals, and particularly women, to strive for a stereotyped ideal of the body as a means of acquiring respect and recognition. For instance, the relationship between the passage of time and the female body relies on modification and its management. Prison comes to control and take away the privilege of individual time-management and change from inmates at a moment in history when the control of both bodies and time has become an integral element of self-identity and presentation (Shilling 2003). Consumer products and fashion, for example, offer the illusion that time and its effects can be masked and controlled. Identity in our somatic societies relies partly on the strategies and outcomes of our efforts to control bodily change and, through such bodily control and the consumption of available products and technologies, late-modern individuals have developed the means to construct their own selves. In this context, the prison comes to change women’s bodies at a time when the only acceptable change is that inflicted individually on the self as part of an on-going project of perfection and conformity. In a sense, then, the prison takes away from women a dominant means of self-making and self-maintenance; it seeks to control women’s only resource of self-control. Ironically, as the quote by Bauman (1991) at the start of this chapter suggests, the prison is the product of a modern effort to control ambivalence, risk and difference through technologies of management; in its effort to achieve this, however, the prison ends up perpetuating and exacerbating the prevalence of ambivalence and social anxiety.

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<sup>55</sup> This is also supported by some twelve step programmes which advance the concept of the ‘recovering’ addict rather than a ‘recovered’ one (Green et al 1998).

## Conclusion

Expanding on Leder's (1990) concept of the '*dys-appearing*' body in pain, this chapter discussed how prisoners' bodies re-appear through the awareness of the 'pains of imprisonment'. Through a *changing body* in prison, which is transformed either through detoxification from addictions or a revival of the senses, the experience of daily life in prison is better understood. The prisoner starts to attend to herself *through* her body, trusting the body to help her cope with prison but also trying to act *towards* it in an attempt to alleviate the 'pains of imprisonment' and punishment inscribed upon it. The body as object is transformed into a docile body in prison: the chapter shows that through its changing dimension, the direct effect of imprisonment on the objectification and oppression of the body is achieved not only through its control in time and space but also its medicalisation. And although, the body-object can also change into a healthy body, it will retain an ambivalent role in one's self perception; struggling to be trusted and managed. Much like the body outside prison, the prisoner's body becomes a project, a constant struggle for perfection and improvement (Shilling 2003). The prisoner's changing body is a fluid and flexible body that, through the passage of time and the impact of regulating prison spaces, changes women's self-perceptions in ways that limit their ability to trust themselves. The result of changing bodies, the chapter argues, is that although they can depict significant improvements to the health of individual women, they nevertheless, bear the marks of a pained identity that suffers from low self-esteem and negative body-image; one that constantly fluctuates in its self-meanings, and persists after imprisonment. It has been suggested that the ambivalence such changes caused by the prison's contradictory aims and its resemblance to (and reliance on) outside pressures focused on the commodification of bodily modification as an essential means of self-making.

## Chapter 6

### Presenting the prisoner: Appearance, performance and embodied self in and after prison

The boundaries between 'us' and 'them' provide for the maintenance, via distinction, of identity. (Bauman and May 2001: 183)

The “look” of the body matters inside prison, but not always in the same ways in which it does outside prison. This chapter demonstrates that in spite of the intense regulation of bodies in prison space and the limited access to material products and options to facilitate change, the prisoner manages nonetheless to maintain an embodied presentation of self<sup>56</sup>. It is however suggested that this increasing reliance on the body as a means of self-presentation and preservation, can result in an emotionally ambivalent fracture between self and body. Being ascribed such an important role, the body becomes a source of both anxiety and relief at varying stages in the prisoner’s experience. The chapter further argues that it is in this complex and ambivalent attitude towards the body that we can trace some of the *missing* or neglected harms of imprisonment on women. Chapter 6 enquires into the prison’s gender impositions on the prisoner and evaluates the function of the body in the presentation of a gendered self within prison culture.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first considers how the prisoner presents her body/self, exploring in particular the significance of clothing in prison which emerged as a salient theme among all of the participants’ narratives. Moreover, aspects of “taking care of the self”, including the use of certain products and the material needs of prisoners, are discussed with reference to canteen days and the use of consumer products in prison. This section also looks at visiting days, a major event in the prisoners’ lives and a significant break to their routines. Embodied experiences of seeing visitors from outside and the use of their bodies to present themselves differently during visiting hours illustrate the participants’ punishment, both as women and as prisoners. The second part of the chapter returns to a discussion that started in Chapter 5 on the impact of bodily change on self-identity. In this I consider further, how the changing body in prison contributes to the development of ambivalent and insecure identities affecting the women’s sense of self, appearance and presentation. This section focuses in particular on increased weight in prison and evaluates the anxieties of presenting the growing and fat body in prison. In so doing, the

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<sup>56</sup> Chapter 5 has suggested that prisoners are stripped of the means of self-making in late modernity which arguably rely on the control and modification of the body on an independent level. This chapter goes on to suggest that this lack of control in maintaining a bodily identity in prison is experienced in an embodied way and in some instances it is resisted by women who nevertheless make efforts to construct a bodily-centred presentation of self in prison.

chapter also considers the relationship between exercise practices and racial aspects of identity and subjectivity. These are discussed as forms of resistance to gender norms and a challenge to prison structures. However, as the chapter shows, instances of resistance have the potential to turn into prison harms. Throughout the chapter we are also reminded of the impact of time and space in understanding the pains of imprisonment. This is particularly noticeable when considering the implications of bodily presentation in women's preparations for release from prison and reintegration into society's normatively gendered value system. A picture of the participants' *double oppression* is drawn out from these prison moments, depicting the punishment and discipline of bodies through gendered but also institutional practices.

### **6.1 How does the prisoner present her body/self?**

#### ***Appearance as bodily performances in prison***

What follows draws on Goffman's (1959:253) understanding of selfhood as the product of 'collaborative manufacture' and argues that this can illustrate the prison's impact on the prisoner's self-perception and her interpretation of the lived experience of imprisonment. Therefore, when discussing women prisoners' identities, this thesis focuses on a 'set of self meanings' (Burke 1991: 837) which include both the 'complete', or 'unified' self (Mead 1934: xxii), and the situation-specific, changing images of the self. Identity therefore, is studied as: *imported into prison, changed in response to prison and negotiated as a result of the prison experience*. This section focuses on how this identity, as it is produced and reproduced into multiple representations, is projected in various social situations in prison and after imprisonment.

Entwistle (2000; 2001) suggests that the female body is central to the construction of identity in different situations. The body fosters the first contact and impression that the individual makes with the social world and is therefore, women's main instrument of impression management (Goffman 1959; Mauss 1934 [1973]), expressing personal choice and agency, as well as responding to external social pressures to look a certain way (Soper 2001; Bordo 1990; 2003; Bartky 1990). Similarly, physical appearance in custody is significant both for prisoners' self-perceptions, and for the maintenance of a socially acceptable role within inmate culture. Women prisoners are often described by prison staff as failing to take care of themselves once they enter prison, and many women accept that they lack motivation to attend to their appearance while in prison. Having said that, all of the interview participants discussed elaborate routines of care-taking while in prison, identifying

particular circumstances where their appearance became crucially important to them (see also Section 7.2).

Arguably, deconstructing appearance contributes to our wider understanding of how women seek to empower themselves and resist regulation, regardless of the dangers this may entail (Weiss 2002; Bosworth 1999). However, and as a number of feminist theorists (Bartky 1988; Bordo 1990; 2003; Butler 1990; Spitzack 1990; Tseëlon 1995) have argued, women internalise the concept of the *male gaze* and think of and construct themselves as objects of sexual desire and oppression. This internalisation leads to a continuous process of physical monitoring that ensures that women do not deviate from the socially inscribed ideals of femininity, even when seeking empowerment.

In our contemporary setting such ideals mandate slimness and youthfulness as key criteria. Feminine ideals demand that women of all backgrounds practice disciplinary regimes of diet, exercise, regular beauty and health-care procedures and the dressing of their bodies with what is, at any given time, considered fashionable clothing. The difference for women prisoners is that, although they feel this pressure as much as “average women”, they do not possess the means to internalise this technology of discipline to the same extent as more affluent and consumer-orientated communities of women. This in turn, often (unintentionally) results in the making of unique and situationally-specific subjectivities which defy and go beyond the accepted categories of gender/sex (Moi 1999).

#### *Bodily comportment, gestures and movement*

Goffman (1963) argues that bodies are central aspects of social interaction and the management of self in public settings (1963: 33). From a similar perspective, Mead (1934) shows that bodily gestures are not only central to socialisation and the presentation of self, but they are also crucial to the constitution of self-identity. Recognising the social nature of bodies and the embodiment of ‘mind’, Mead suggests that both consciousness (mind) and identity are constituted on a ‘biosocial’ level (1934: xv)<sup>57</sup>. Social acts, he argues, start with bodily actions that come in the form of gestures and lead to a ‘conversation of gestures’ in which individuals choose their actions in relation to, and in communication with, what

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<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, he recognises the entity of the material, biological body but shows how this becomes a ‘mindful body’ or a self through language and gestures. Gestures and bodily interaction are, therefore, elements of self-making but also self-perception and meaning. Meanwhile, Mead describes how language itself is constituted by society and (biological) bodies, alluding to an interactionist co-constitution of social selves similar to the phenomenology of perception discussed by Merleau-Ponty (1962).



others gesture to them. In this exchange, Mead shows that gestures entail meaning in themselves and, at the same time, are symbolic of something else (1934: xx-xxi).

Knowing, therefore, what gestures to employ in order to communicate and present the self a certain way, entails an awareness of the dynamics of power present in every social interaction (Foucault 1981b). Moreover, attending to the relationship between bodies and power informs us about the underlying structures that shape behaviour. Women, for example, are socially expected to contain and regulate their bodies in ways that use limited space and movement. As Howson (2005) explains, 'the restricted space in which women operate and the closed body characteristic of feminine comportment and movement, [signify] an imaginary space that confines women' (2005: 59). This experience of body confinement is obviously augmented within the limiting domain of the prison.

Participants explained that, over time, they *learned* to move their bodies in prison space in ways that would not be considered threatening to prison staff or would not put them 'in trouble'. Such learned practices included never running or challenging the bodily boundaries of staff or other inmates in the presence of staff. At the same time, they talked about maintaining a sense of bodily hierarchy within their inmate culture by, for example, asserting themselves physically when necessary, to avoid labelling and prison roles they did not wish to perform:

I wouldn't bounce around thinking I was something I'm not, because then you are going to get trouble from the others. The only time I had to look after myself was in the [YOI] ... I was paired in the cell with another girl, a lesbian, and she tried it on with me, and I've been just put down on my methadone, so I felt pretty[ bad]. So I ignored her and ignored her until one day, in the [YOI] the cell doors are open basically all day, so somebody went into our part and broke a CD player and she tried to blame me for it, so *once the doors were shut*, I just had enough of it, because if you let someone do it, they will keep doing it to you, so I had to fight her. I'd kicked and punched her pretty bad; she hit the buzzer and was screaming 'get me out, get me out' but I had to show her and everyone else I wasn't going to take that anymore. (Magda)

Although prisoners have practically no control over the operation of the prison space, there are, nevertheless, circumstances in which they can impose themselves and manage their identities and relations, by working within the time and space constraints of the prison. Magda's intention to show to her cellmate that she was not to be disempowered was asserted through a physical demonstration of her intention to avoid subservience within the inmate culture.

### *Dress as harm and the prison's "male gaze"*

This sub-section considers the significance of clothing in prison from two main perspectives. First, it evaluates how the prison guidelines on clothing allowances for women prisoners were perceived by the participants. For instance, most participants believed that such limitations deliberately invoked a 'stripping of identity' (Goffman 1963). They described the regulation of clothing as a form of indirect punishment, adding to their humiliation, low self-esteem and stigmatisation. This echoes Ash's (2010) argument that prison dress is a direct reflection of the prison's punitive character. Following on from this first point, all of the participants discussed the significance of clothes in the maintenance of a respectable prisoner identity within inmate culture. Clothing was reported as a cause of bullying, mortification and antagonism among the women inmates. It was striking that it was not only the questionnaire participants (current prisoners) who focused on their negative experiences in regard to clothing in prison: all of the interview participants (ex-prisoners) elaborately discussed the painful and traumatic experiences of imprisonment through examples about clothing.

According to the participants' narratives, the prisoner is required, to rebuild her identity based on prison-culture values, but she is offered limited access to the material props necessary for identity-making. When I asked Alicia whether she liked herself she said:

There isn't much to like. My body is disgusting, obviously what I've done to myself, through injecting my body, how I look and *the memory of how I used to look* before ... being on the streets, not wearing the clothes I wanted to wear and then going to prison, having no clothes in prison, losing my clothes in prison, you live with nothing in there, it's just everything about it, you feel like something's always missing. (Alicia)

Alicia exemplifies a material awareness of her body and a placement of her body as central to her identity. Her focus on clothes not only depicts lack of ownership in prison but also shows the chaotic movement of identities as they enter and leave prison. Although prisons appear to have considered the particular needs of women in regards to clothing availability<sup>58</sup>, some participants explained that, in practice, they had little access to appropriate clothes. As Alicia suggests the lack of options available hindered her ability to fully recognise herself in her prisoner identity. Her sense of material loss reflects her internal conflict in constructing her own identity, but also materialises her emotional pain as an ex-addict and ex-prisoner.

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<sup>58</sup>As PSO 4800 (2008: 19) explains, the prison service has 'generally recognised that part of the rehabilitation for many women prisoners involves the ability to maintain and raise self-esteem'. The document further adds that 'women should be supplied with at least two changes of reasonable quality clothing if they have no money to buy it. [...] Women who are likely to remain in the prison for longer than a few days, should have at least 5 sets of underwear and 2 changes of outer wear' (PSO4800 2008:19).

As Butler (1990) argues, (gendered) identity-making employs a series of performance mechanisms that rely on the body and the materiality of props such as clothing. Alicia's experience of a sense of constant loss, partly due to her limited access to clothes, also depicts the relationship between dress and body (Tyner and Ogle 2009). Clothing makes the biological body sociable and, with reference to clothing, Alicia explains the consequences of her chaotic lifestyle and her sense of purposelessness and inability to fit in or be "normal".

The prisoners' information book on Women Prisoners (2003) explains the general prison rule on clothing:

All women prisoners, whether un-convicted or convicted, can wear their own clothes, as long as they are suitable, clean and tidy. However, if the Governor thinks there may be a serious risk of you attempting to escape, you may have to wear distinctive clothes, which mark you out as an escape risk ... If you do not have many clothes you can ask for prison issue clothing ... If you do not have enough suitable clothes, the prison must provide you with them. Your friends and relatives may be allowed to bring in clothes for you, and take away other clothes to wash. (HM Prison Service 2003)

Although the term 'suitable' is not defined, it appeared from the interviews that all of the participants understood that they had to dress modestly and to avoid provocative dress that could be too revealing or 'dangerous' for prison security. This reflects perceptions of gender normativity and, as the participants explained, the regulations are aimed at stopping the women from 'seducing' (Fiona) both officers and other inmates.

And the other thing is, not to wear anything provocative; you don't want that kind of attention in there. We weren't allowed strappy tops or anything revealing, the guidelines are quite strict. The officers give you trouble about that kind of thing, so you'd know to never show too much skin. (Katherine)

The focus of these guidelines on the women's bodies as sites of sexual provocation demonstrates the gender-specific correction that women's bodies undergo during imprisonment, and also the sexually depriving punishment this entails. By viewing the female body from a "male gaze" perspective, prison and penal policy attempt to prevent the risk they see in the female body's potential to sexually provoke. This perspective reflects the popular view of women's bodies as predominantly sexual and "out of control", but it also implies the ability of an overtly sexual body to be dangerous or threatening to prison order. Ironically, this view also reflects an argument made within feminist theories of dress which sees overtly sexual dress as a form of empowerment and resistance for women (Lorde 1984; Miller 2002). On the one hand, the prisoner's body is seen as a sexual object and, on the other, it is perceived as an active sexual agent. Along with references to women prisoners as "girls" by prison staff, women in prison experience a stripping of their sense of womanhood,

and yet are faced with constant attempts to re-educate them in an etiquette that reflects the values of modest femininity (Carlen et al. 1985).

Moreover, several participants claimed that their choice of clothes was intended to provide protection from the sexual attention of other inmates. Some argued that those women who had sexual relations in prison seemed to put more effort into their appearance, unlike the majority of women who, once in prison, partly lost the motivation to appear sexually attractive. The concept of attractiveness for the sake of sexual attention reflects an interesting transformation of the male gaze that is generally seen to drive women's appearance anxieties outside the prison (Mulvey 1975).

Pauline explained that clothing becomes one of the prisoners' first problems, as lack of clothing is often the result of their failure to anticipate a custodial sentence after trial. Once received into prison, access to their own clothes is dependent upon their visitors and outside contacts bringing or sending clothing to them.

When I went in, I went with what clothes I had on at court. Some people take a bag with them if they know they will get sentenced, but I really didn't expect to be sentenced. So I only had my clothes that I was wearing in court and then they can lend you some clothes until you get someone to send you some. And obviously my dad had to send my clothes, he didn't know what clothes I liked, so you are just wearing the same clothes all the time, so it's not what you would *choose* to put on together, it's not what you would like. It's just what my dad had put together, and he is a man, he doesn't know what clothes to send me. (Pauline)

Pauline draws an obvious connection between personal choice, individuality and taste in clothing and associates the ability to choose what to wear with the achievement of femininity. Her father's inability to reflect her own choices emphasises for her the sense of displacement and disempowerment she felt when forced to wear the clothes he had chosen for her.

Another issue about prison clothing raised by Pauline, but also echoed by others relates to inmate antagonism and the fragile sense of self-presentation within prison culture:

[...] and you don't want to dress *too nicely*, because you don't want people to think, 'oh who does she think she is', you really don't want to provoke any of those people in there. (Pauline)

And you get a lot of trouble, off the other girls. Well, I don't know how to put it, the way many of them would dress was quite 'chavvy', you know? Like, sports clothes and that's not how I liked to dress, but then again, if I went dressed like this [points to herself wearing buttoned shirt and dark trousers], they would think 'oh who does she think she is' and they can get quite aggressive about that. (Yolanda)

If they don't have many clothes, or if they are wearing certain things, they get bullied. It's like being back in school again; you get tormented for the clothes you wear, as if you even chose them. (Berta)

Their comments on how clothes affect their everyday co-existence with other inmates reflect the importance of self-image within prison culture. The participants explained how they had to make a conscious effort to “dress down” in order to fit in and avoid being bullied for appearing too different from the rest (this “different” probably implying more affluent and more feminine styles). At the same time, there is an obvious element of competitiveness among women inmates which reflects their experience of competition outside prison in relation to their appearance and the struggle to be attractive. There appears to be a parallel ambivalence about dress and appearance in prison which both resonates with outside anxieties and also takes on a different form within prison culture. The participants explained that dress could be used as an empowering strategy and reflection of individuality, while at the same time it could act as an additional means of regulation and restraint on their behaviour. Unlike dress in the outside community, dressing too differently in prison (be that a “professional” look or a “too dressed up” look) would attract negative attention. However, prisoners looking ‘too messy’ in their dress could also be subject to bullying.

Understanding the participants’ experiences of bullying and competition over clothing was possible in large measure because I shared with the women a common referential content. For instance, when Pauline pointed to her clothes during the interview and explained that she could not wear them in prison, I understood why that was (even though I was never a prisoner). Dress comes with attached symbolic meanings that are shared, particularly among women in a given cultural context, making the presentation of self a process of articulating aspects of one’s identity by means of a shared language of embodiment and gestures (Mead 1934). Therefore, theoretically and methodologically embodied reflexivity acted as an essential tool with which to conceptualise the participants’ narratives.

Hebdige (1983: 404) suggested that power is inscribed on the look of things, and some feminist theorists have suggested that the dressed body could potentially act as a tool of women’s empowerment and resistance (Bordo 2003; Weitz 2002; Tyner and Ogle 2009). Within the context of prisoner culture, clothing appears to take on a powerful role, allowing those who have access to “acceptable” clothing (and bodies) to generate more respect, status and admiration from other inmates and so to rise up in the prisoner hierarchy. There is a *clothing code* in prisons whereby certain types of outfit are culturally acceptable, while

others are subject to criticism and bullying (Ash 2010). For example, there is the expectation that women wear sports clothes, which are expensive and fashionable yet not feminine (exemplifying physical strength and youthfulness). These types of clothing reflect general youth culture fashion values, which can be explained by the predominantly young prison population. Therefore, clothing rules in prison culture appear to incorporate gendered, ageist and classed norms. The examples that follow make this distinction clearer:

They will give you trouble, if you haven't got the best of everything, you don't look the nicest. So there's competition. [There is] loads of bullying about clothes; about what you got and what you wearing. (Emily)

You can't wear scruffy stuff in there ... Like, you need someone to send you nice stuff, then you will probably get on better with other girls, and that's stupid but that's how it is, there is so much bullying about looks in there. (Magda)

What I had with me was diesel jeans and quite expensive things and they would say 'oh those are nice' and at first I would say 'oh thanks', then you realise, 'oh wait a minute!' they will either nick them or give you trouble, so you have to be more careful. So in the end, I would wear just simpler jeans, a vest top and a cardigan, which is not what I would usually ... I would be a bit more creative usually. I would usually put more effort in looking organised and stand out more. (Hayley)

In New Hall, I hated it, I would wear a denim skirt and people would go 'oh you are wearing a skirt!' So I had to switch to a different sort of style, jeans and trainers, you know, a sports look, more casual. You were limited in being particularly feminine in prison. (Denise)

Bullying practices in regard to both those prisoners who demonstrated the material means with which to present their bodies in either more expensive, unique or feminine clothing, or those prisoners who did not have these means, shows the inflexible value system of prisoner culture. It also demonstrates that normative standards of dress are not tolerated in women's prisons, requiring prisoners to conform not only to the prison regime, but also to the inmate code.

#### *Visiting days: a picture of double oppression?*

Visiting days acted as the main means through which the inmates made contact with the outside world and corporeally got in touch with their lives before imprisonment. This momentary reconnection with the world entailed inmates literally "putting on" their pre-prison identities in order to be recognised and successfully accepted by whoever was visiting. The process of preparation and alternation of appearance during visiting hours meant that women prisoners felt the need to appear appealing to their visitors, attempting to show good coping skills and, at the same time, desiring to appear attractive, usually sexually attractive, to their visitors (see also Moran 2013b):

I didn't wear make-up in prison, I usually wear a bit of make-up, I don't put on too much, but I always like to have a bit on, but in prison I didn't, unless my boyfriend was visiting me. Because otherwise you just think, 'what's the point, it's going to cost me money to get it', I mean maybe if you were gay you would want to ... but for me it was just looking good for visits. (Carmen)

For your own self-esteem you would want to keep taking care of yourself in prison, some girls in there wore lots of makeup, especially for visits. Visiting days were very funny, it was high heels, makeup, proper dressing up ... it was like they were going clubbing! And I suppose it was to keep their appeal to whoever was coming to visit them. I mean there were still guidelines but at the open prison they were more relaxed during visits. (Denise)

These observed changes in terms of effort and physical appearance during visits entailed a perception among women that “looks” are a performance put on for the purpose of heterosexual appeal.

The eagerness to retain contact with the outside world through this staged performance illustrates the women's internalised social pressures and their gendered identities. These pressures and presentations interestingly were not employed unless an audience would be present to expect that of them, such as a boyfriend. In their daily life away from the outside world, and within the confines of the prison, the women would not put on the same gendered performances. Indeed, most of the participants distinguished between regimes of “taking care of the self” in the form of basic bodily hygiene, for example (see Section 7.2), and other aspects of body care that are associated with femininity and heterosexuality but which were less necessary as coping techniques.

However there were prisoners for whose visits marked essential changes in their appearance not for reasons of sexual appeal but in an attempt to retain ties with the outside world and promote smoother communication with their loved ones, especially their children:

I'm too old for too much makeup and all that, what I would try to do with visits to be honest was look healthy and I guess I would sort of pretend to be happy. My mum would bring my daughter in sometimes and I didn't want her to see me sad, it would just make me even more depressed. I just tried to look decent, wanted to look respectable in her eyes, so I would try to cover up the weight I gained, I would put my hair down to look more feminine. I wanted to look good for her and for her not to forget me. (Eve)

Constituting only short periods of time, visits allow some prisoners to put together a controlled performance that aims to retain and reflect a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. This stems from the prisoners' emotional need to retain ties with the outside world and maintain relationships to which they could return after release. This aspect of imprisonment is, therefore, one of the few moments in prison life where a future-orientated approach to

time is employed as a coping strategy. Or as Moran (2013b) has suggested, visiting rooms are unique spaces in prison which constitute a significant ‘inbetweenness’ or ‘liminality’ in space that connects the outside and the inside worlds of the prison and merges the cultures, pressures and anxieties of both worlds.

Arguably, the image of prison visits reflects women prisoners’ double deviance and double oppression. Visits are a vital moment in the prison experience where the outside pressures of physical appearance permeate the walls of the prison: they represent the combination of women’s punishment and their perseverance in the face of it. Their regulation in prison can therefore be said to come *both* from their outside roles as gendered sexual subjects and from within the prison, as punished and stigmatised subjects.

### ***Presentation through consumption***

#### ***Prison Canteen***

Arguably the prison experience is perceived through changing moments and situations that affect the prisoner and demand different reactions from her. Although prison life follows a mundane routine and a prescribed timetable, life in prison varies for every prisoner in every prison at different moments in time. Overall, the experience is meant to be punitive, and it is felt as exceptionally painful. There are times, however, when feelings about imprisonment change and show a different picture of the prison for short, momentary breaks from the everyday routine. One such example is the weekly occurrence of canteen days. During canteen days, women purchase comfort food that is seen as a coping strategy in itself (see Chapter 7), and also engage in quick yet meaningful consumer choices that are vital to their identities. Buying cigarettes, for example, is crucial not only because they are a means by which women pass time, but because they are significant consumer goods in the black economy of the prison and they are also an important performance prop for some women ( see also Kalinich 1980; Seyler 1988).

Many women work and save up money for this one day in the week when they can purchase toiletries of their choice and allow themselves indulgencies that relate to their bodily well-being and self-presentation. Some women buy lotions and shampoo, while others invest in makeup or jewellery. Seeing prison as a break from very chaotic and destructive lifestyles, some participants explained that although limited and constrained in prison, they attained a renewed interest in looking after themselves. However, this eagerness to take care of their self-presentation was expressed mainly as a means of coping with



imprisonment and retaining a sense of individuality, or as an attempt to demonstrate to their families and friends outside prison their “progress” and rehabilitation.

Most of the participants said that canteen was one of the most pleasurable moments in prison. As Fiona explained, ‘canteen day was the one day a week everyone looked forward to’. However, with similar unanimity, the women expressed dissatisfaction with the limited options available at the canteen. Many of them saw this limited choice as a symbolic reflection of their punishment and another instance of the prison stripping them of their individuality.

Not really *good* choices, I think that was the issue, they didn’t really think of *what problems we’d have in prison and what products we’d need for them* ... you might think I’m a hypochondriac, but because I was under a lot of stress in prison, it comes out in different ways and it affects my skin for example. Or I get eczema. And I couldn’t get any facial products or proper eczema shampoo. They didn’t have what I wanted or needed, it was just really basic products. (Eve)

When I had money, I would buy shower gel, softeners and washing powder, biscuits, noodles, sweets, cigarettes ... Not being feminine in prison wasn’t a real problem for me, but all the other girls complained about the options in the canteen. (Anna)

Eve considered the limited products available at the canteen as a reflection of the lack of awareness of the prison service to the pains of women’s imprisonment and their psychosomatic manifestations. Other participants reflected similar views, arguing that through such services, the prison often reflected its lack of knowledge about their backgrounds and little interest in their daily needs.

Complaints about the canteen options were particularly related to skin and hair products. Stocking only what might be described as generic toiletries and ignoring more specialised products, symbolised to the participants the prison’s attempt to treat them all ‘equally’ without considering their differences. The questionnaire participants were particularly critical of the prison’s defeminising attempts in regard to product options and, as Q-Maria explained these efforts for equality through simplicity were partly to blame for the overtly ‘macho’ and ‘aggressive’ culture that women’s prisons seem to breed. Participants who identified with an ethnic minority, in both the interviews and questionnaires, explained that the canteen’s limited options meant that they could not use products specific to their skin or hair types. As Q-Ferya explained, such lack of attention to the differential needs of certain women felt ‘unfair ... It’s like we are supposed to pretend we are all the same, but I still have the hair I have [...] and when you complain about it they make you feel like you

are too demanding'. Therefore, maintaining a gender and racial identity in prison was often compromised by the provision of only basic or generic products.

Overall, it could be said that the women in this study appeared somewhat ambivalent in their attitudes toward gender performances and femininity in prison. While some admitted that the reduced pressure to appear feminine in prison was a welcome break to their routines, others seemed more uncertain, explaining prison's feminising services and attitudes as both oppressive but also necessary. The following section makes this clearer through a consideration of both gender and race.

#### *Hair Salon: services and products of self-keeping*

The topics of bodily well-being and racial and gender identities were often discussed in relation to hair types and the presentation of hair in prison. For example, in terms of race, some participants tended to discuss physical difference as a positive, but also necessary, means through which to resist normative standards of femininity and the controlling power of the prison. Iris, for instance, explained how in prison she had to let her hair be 'natural' because the lack of suitable products to keep her hair 'down', meant she had to accept and eventually embrace the difference her hair represented:

The first couple of weeks I was getting quite nervous about [the hair] [...] because I didn't have all the stuff I use at home, it had to stay natural, you know? My hair gets quite big and out of control if you don't do anything to it. So in jail I couldn't keep it down. They did have straighteners but, with my hair I'd need 2-3 hours to do just that [...] So I decided to just let it be. Eventually, and because the other girls would tell me too, I started liking it. It started feeling more like me, you know? I'd associate with it and think it showed more the *real* me. (Iris)

Feeling proud of her ethnic identity for this participant meant resisting notions of femininity and conformity to prevailing trends (see also Weitz 2002). She explained that focusing on looking more appealing was not something she considered worthy of her time in prison. Similarly, Alicia also remarked that accessing beauty products from the canteen was something she felt less inclined to do because her gender identity was less under pressure inside prison.

Having said this, many participants felt that their hair was an important symbol of their gendered identity and was, therefore, an important means to reflect their femininity. For example, Carmen explained that during her trial it was important to appear feminine:<sup>59</sup>

[...] when I went to court I had a friend who helped me straighten my hair and braid it, to look more proper and innocent, you know? (Carmen)

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<sup>59</sup> Assuming that by appearing feminine she would get a more lenient sentence.

Hairstyling was used to promote femininity in prison as well, particularly on visiting days (Fiona and Alicia). Moreover, hair types were used as important symbols of *difference* in prison and, as some participants explained, racial and cultural backgrounds were often expressed by styling hair in ethnically representative ways:

I would hang out more with the Nigerian ladies, because you know, we had more in common [...] we would help each other with skin and hair problems, we'd fix each other's hair ... so yeah, it's important to keep with your own. One of them worked in the salon, and the hair salon in jail's good. We all had our hair cut and they trained them to do black women's hair, so that was quite good. (Katherine)

Focus on hair was an important feature of one's identity largely because it is a bodily feature that is relatively easy to manage and alternate. The use of the salon, therefore, appeared to be a popular feature of the prison because it was a service that allowed women to make individual choices and decisions about their appearance and representation. As Denise explained:

There were some attempts to make you feel more feminine, especially the hairdressers. Everyone liked the hair salon. You could do all sort of things to your hair, and everyone liked that. It's nice to have a bit of pampering. It was also a good way to keep up with your appearance, you know, feel you could do whatever you wanted with yourself, well, at least with your hair. (Denise)

The participants in this study tended to welcome the opportunity to be "more feminine" while in prison, and some explained that visiting the hairdressers and purchasing beauty products from the canteen acted as strategies of self-keeping.

#### *Buying as both pain and as coping*

Thus, the pleasure of consumption inside prison, exercised either through canteen or access to beauty-related services, was described by some as a way of doing gender but also as a form of maintaining a sense of self inside prison. The *negative freedom* that such consumption allowed meant that women could practise decision-making and personal choice on how to represent and take care of their bodies.

Admittedly the feminist inclination of this study meant that for me as researcher it was difficult to acknowledge and fully understand the liberating emotions felt by some participants in regard to the consumption and purchase of feminising products and services. During some interviews, it was clear that efforts to keep a feminine appearance were described almost as forms of resistance to the prison's institutional elements. Doing gender as a form of resistance resonated with some of the existing literature on women's appearance and representation in the outside community (e.g. Bordo 1990; 1999a; 2003), but it is also an important argument made by Bosworth (1999) in regard to women prisoners in particular. However, for me, the materially dependent and consumptive character of many of these

women's experiences of imprisonment reflected also their sense of double deviance (Carlen 1998), where their punishment primarily as women and not just as offenders meant that their sense of identity, particularly in terms of gender, was under threat and was constantly negotiated 'under pressure' (Bordo 2003). Working on the body and engaging with gendered practices and consumption, therefore, meant that the participants were actively attempting to defy the (gendered) stigma of their imprisonment. In a sense, the representation of the canteen or the hair salon as places of pleasure act as particular exceptions to the prison's overall description as oppressive. These exceptions are significant symbols of the interaction between prison control and outside social controls imposed on women. Together, these represent the neo-liberal prison as a site of women's double oppression and highlight the contemporary-consumerist focus on the modification and management of bodies as forms of identity-keeping (Shilling 2003).

Finally, many participants mentioned that the freedom of choice offered by the canteen or some feminising prison services required women to have the material means to pay for them. Through such services, the prison not only promoted a gendered approach to women's correction, but also reproduced a materialist culture based on consumption as a way of maintaining an acceptable sense of self. To this end, having a job was considered a necessary means of survival in prison, not only because working meant that time inside prison passed more easily, but also because paid work made possible participation in the prison's only pleasure: consumption. In fact, some participants who did not have much money in prison, pointed to how their prison experience was even more painful due to their exclusion from such consumptive practices.

## **6.2 Changing bodies and ambivalent selves: Bodily presentation as a response to bodily change**

The presentation and the "look" of the body is an integral indicator of one's background, self-perception, social status and lived experiences. Thus, presenting the self through the body entails an element of bodily awareness. This means that each woman's body-image plays a crucial function in how she will perceive her appearance and re-construct and manage it within varying social settings (Gatens 1996; Irigaray 1985b). Thus, an unstable sense of body-image can contribute to insecurity and anxiety in the presentation of self, but it can also impact negatively on each individual's opportunities for social interaction and integration (Schilder 1950). The argument that underscores this thesis, and particularly the three chapters that detail the empirical findings, is that an awareness of the body as it is lived in prison can cause the prisoner and, later on, the ex-prisoner, to have a

fractured and damaged relationship between self and body. This is because in its on-going changes, the prisoner's body becomes an ambivalent site and an untrustworthy means with which to transform the self. Imprisonment makes the prisoner both aware of her body's positive potential and wary of the body's limitations and stigmatising function, acting as a process of '*dys-embodiment*' (Leder 1990). It is argued here that this painful awareness of the body during and after imprisonment defines the body-punishment relation (Howe 1994). The body is the object and target of punishment and this '*dys-embodied*', or painfully embodied, experience of imprisonment is a manifestation of the centrality of the body in the delivery of punishment.

The development of this ambivalent attitude towards the body adds to an increased interest in the "look" and presentation of the body within prison. The reason for this is that the more uncertain the individual is about her body-image, the more eager she will be to control it (Shilling 2003; Gatens 1996). In being able to imagine our own bodies are seen by others, we evaluate and scrutinise our appearance in order to suit social standards. Doing this is not an unreflective activity. Our bodies and appearance reflect aspects of our individuality and the image of our bodies, therefore, is attributed a series of emotional meanings (Gatens 1996). Bauman and May explain this in relation to the social character of our identities:

[... ] if something in our bodies, and especially in the appearance of our bodies, stops short of the ideal, the repairing of the situation seems to remain within our power to alter. In this way our bodies fluctuate between being objects of love and pride to sources of annoyance and shame. (Bauman and May 2001: 105)

In an earlier work, Bauman (1991:2) talked about 'ambivalence' as a key characteristic of modernity. He sees modernity as an era in which societies attempted to manage uncertainty and ambivalence through strategies that reproduce and perpetuate states of ambivalence. He explains ambivalence as the outcome of systems of classification and exclusion. This analysis can explain succinctly why women experience such ambivalence in terms of their own appearance. Bauman and May (2001) give an appropriate example of how classification may create exclusion and thus emotional ambivalence through dress:

Those who have more disposable income than others can afford to dress in particular ways and these act as codes for classifying persons by the splendour, misery or oddity of their appearance. (Bauman and May 2001: 39)

As the authors suggest, therefore, the production of self-identity relies on such classifications or 'boundaries' which, through their distinctive symbols, determine one's identity *in relation* to that of others (Bauman and May: 183).

Most of my participants' comments on gender identity involved ideas about efforts to "take care of the body", through nutritional health, gaining or losing weight, maintaining a sense of daily hygiene in prison or putting on makeup, "dressing up", styling hair or using basic cosmetic accessories purchased from the canteen. This resonates with the entanglement of consumer culture and discourses of health in late-modernity that have been the subject of much critique in regard to women's bodily practices outside prison (e.g. Featherstone et al. 1991; Shilling 2001; 2005b; 2008; see Chapter 3).

The focus on the constant transformation of the participants' bodies before, during and after imprisonment led to comparisons regarding the differences between life in and out of prison, particularly in relation to women's gender roles and the performance of sexual identities in prison. Participants discussed gaining and/or losing a 'sense of womanhood' because of imprisonment and discussed the function of sexuality in the presentation of self in prison. All of these themes allude to the power of heterosexual norms (Butler 1990; 1993) and patriarchal commodity aesthetics (Baudrillard 1998) to forge embodied identities for women both during and after imprisonment. Finally, the participants related questions about their bodies and health in prison to the theme of self-esteem in prisons which was addressed as both a means of practising resistance (Wolf 1991; Bordo 2003) and as a broader problem of women's self and body-image during and after prison (Schilder 1950; Goffman 1959; 1963). The following section highlights how transformation affected the presentation strategies of the participants.

### ***The changing concept of "fat" in prison***

The participants' feelings of negative body-image were explained mainly, but not exclusively, in regard to weight issues (see also Cash and Henry 1995). Body-image in prison did not necessarily reflect similar attitudes observed in the community, as it entailed a complex, dialectic relation to the specific experience of imprisonment. This was particularly noticeable through the participants' unique perspective on the concept of fat, which many perceived as a positive attribute. Being prison-specific, however, this more positive approach towards the growing body tended to change towards the end of women's sentences, highlighting thus the importance of changing perceptions as constituted by the ordering of time through custodial sentences. As the interview participants explained their emotions about physical changes were also constantly changing, depending on the particular moment in their prison sentence, or their life and interactions outside of prison.

It could be argued that in an attempt to explore physical identity in prison, many parallels could be drawn to reflect the common bodily anxieties of women in and out of prison, the most obvious being the anxiety about “gaining weight”. However, one main difference between women in prison and the general women’s population is that women prisoners’ particular experiences of deprivation, physical abuse and self-injury produced a *different value system* regarding their health and their ideals of physical appearance and attractiveness. The women prisoners’ ideals did not express the common appraisal of slenderness and dieting regimes to the degree that studies reveal that middle-class women do in the western world (Bordo 2003; Bartky 1990). This may be because, for many of the participants, the experience of having a “fat” body came only after having a rather malnourished, deprived, “thin” body, giving them a different perspective in regard to their embodied identities. The following examples illustrate this:

Size 12 is the ideal, right? , it’s got to be a normal, womanly size. I used to look really skinny and it looked horrible. I would rather have more weight on than be underweight. I would rather be chubby. (Laura)

I gained weight [in prison], after a couple of weeks, I was eating every day ... not that the food was good. I went in 8 stone and I came out 12. I definitely felt better about myself after that. (Vera)

When I came out of prison, I was putting more and more weight on and that was, my *success marker*. Because the drugs had stripped everything away from me, I was so skinny and ill, so when I came out of prison I was proud of my fat; I thought it showed how well I was doing. (Katherine)

Thus, while the literature illustrates that the late-modern woman in the outside community strives for slenderness (Giddens 1991; Nettleton and Watson 1998; Bordo 1990), some participants in this study exemplify an entirely different understanding and evaluation of such values of body-image and femininity. As Chapter 5 has also shown, this could be partly explained by the unique conception of health that the participants displayed which links to their past experiences of exclusion, addictions and ill health.

As discussed in Chapter 5, most of the women, who rehabilitated from addictions in prison, used the image of their growing bodies as a ‘success marker’, indicating that their lifestyles had also changed. As a result of the particular backgrounds the participants came from, they appeared ironically to portray a “healthy” – yet arguably “misinformed” – understanding of both female bodies and heterosexual norms of attractiveness. As psychoanalytic writing suggests, body-image is constituted from the internalisation of social norms, expectations and judgements in relation to one’s body (Schilder 1950; Grosz 1994) thus, the participants’ different and arguably more subjectively affected perceptions of “health”, “femininity” and “beauty” show how these women are often excluded from wider

public perceptions and pressures, having literally lived differently in the world that we all share.

Finally, a number of the participants commented on how their *fluctuation* in body size and weight during imprisonment – rather than the actual growth of their body mass – became an additional burden in terms of available clothing:

But then you put on these massive amounts of weight. It was quite bad actually, because my mum couldn't afford to buy me new clothes so if it wasn't for my friends [in prison], I wouldn't have clothes to wear. Even though you are not supposed to lend your clothes to other girls, but I had to borrow some, there was no other way. (Erika)

Because you know that the moment you wake up and get out of the cell, if you look fat and you are wearing a tiny top that used to fit months before, and now they can see fat popping out of it, and you look like a stuffed sausage in it, *you know* someone is going to say something, you can hear them giggle behind your back, or they might even say it to your face, and that really didn't feel good. (Fiona)

The lack of material props for self-making result in the development of more creative processes of self-presentation and identity formation, while at the same time requiring simpler, less individually informed, processes of accepting the fate of the body and the self within prison. For example, purchasing plastic jewellery from the canteen or secretly exchanging clothes were presented as examples of the ways prisoners find to manage their prisoner identities and resist their regulation.

### ***Race, sexuality, size and exercise in prison***

The option of exercise offered to women prisoners was not as widely appreciated by the participants as other services, such as the canteen or hair salon. Most women in this study did not make use of the gym in prison. As many of the ex-addicts explained, the process of detoxification is physically draining and therefore using the gym in prison was not something they wanted to do. Other participants explained their reluctance to exercise in the gym was due to the emotionally painful effects of imprisonment and the lethargic character of daily life in prison. Some also explained their lack of motivation and effort as reflective of their lack of confidence and self-esteem, as well as a lack of external pressure to retain a slender body.

All of the participants made an association between body size and exercise and explained their increase in weight partly by their sedentary lifestyle inside prison. There was, however, a small minority among the questionnaire participants who said that exercise was an essential part of their life in prison, not because it helped them to keep a slender body but,



on the contrary, because it allowed them to build physical strength and muscle. Through such physical strength, these participants could feel and appear more powerful, aggressive and self-determining. For this group of women, such features were essential in practising an identity that defied feminine values of passivity and weakness and helped retain a higher status within inmate culture. Working within this culture of 'megarexia' (Marzano-Parisoli 2001), the athletic body had an important social function in prison for a group of women, all of whom identified with a black ethnic group. To this end, the large, muscular body tended to appear in these narratives not only as an expression of racial identity but also as resistance to gender norms. As participants Q-Marina and Q-Ferya wrote, working on making their bodies strong was part of a conscious effort to build a 'strong' body that no one 'could mess with' (Q-Ferya). These participants also explained that working at the prison gym allowed them to engage in a culture that was characterised by a more 'energetic' and 'active' outlook on life that defied the emotionally low and lethargic atmosphere that existed elsewhere in the prison. Q-Marina referred to the importance of exercise not only in making her body more muscular but also in allowing her to engage in competitive sports that contributed to feelings of individuality and to a sense of 'belongingness' within certain groups in prison. One of the few interview participants who discussed exercise, Katherine talked about her desire to keep a 'healthy, womanly' body that was not necessarily feminine, but muscular and strong. Inverting gendered norms, Katherine explained that in her cultural background (she identified as a Nigerian-British woman), mobility and the ability to portray potency were essential features of 'mature, adult women'.

Implicit in some other participants' discussions was the notion that homosexuality in prison was often expressed through a defiance towards feminine values and an eagerness to appear masculine and strong. As Anna explained, 'looking strong was good for yourself in prison, but also for whoever you were with', meaning that a sense of security and protection was achieved through both an effort to appear physically strong or interact with women who looked physically powerful. The prison, therefore, often reproduced similar symbols attached to the body to those found within predominantly heterosexual encounters. In fact, most participants tended to categorise themselves within the binary of the masculine and aggressive woman prisoner and the more 'girly', effeminate and submissive prisoner.

Sexuality, therefore, was an important category of identification and a determinant of appearance in prison. Those women who did not identify as homosexual explained that they often felt threatened by the impositions of overtly masculine, lesbian women. Meanwhile, participants who did engage in homosexual relations in prison also categorised

themselves within this masculine and feminine binary. This was particularly evident in my group interview with Anna and Berta, who met in prison and continue to be in a relationship outside:

Berta: Because [Anna] has *always* been gay, she's more, well, she doesn't worry about having fat or spots on her face, whereas I do, and she tells me not to worry. [Anna] has never been fussed, in jail she didn't have to wear the best of clothes or trainers, whereas me, I do, I like to look good and I like to have the latest trainers.

Anna: In jail loads of girls 'turn' gay, or bi or whatever, and *those* will always look more feminine. They dress up and try to look nice in jail, I'm guessing for the other girls, right? [asks Berta] [laughs]. Whereas the *others* don't really bother with all that, for someone like me it's more about looking clean or healthy, than looking girly. (Group interview; Anna and Berta)

There were a lot [of women] who had a boyfriend on the outside and a girlfriend on the inside, and they wouldn't tell each about the other, so many girls 'turn' lesbian and those are usually more feminine. Like, there are some others that you can't really tell if they are a boy or a girl, you have to look twice to know, but some others used makeup and tried to appear good to those more manly ones. (Alicia)

There was one [lesbian prisoner] that liked me and my friend. And she was the one who run the wing, it was really scary actually because she was quite big and manly, you know? She used to do weights at the gym and looked so scary. (Olga)

As the above participants explain, femininity is still an important element of sexual relations in prison. Elements of gendered, sexual and racial performance therefore, are essential for understanding prisoner relations and processes of self "remaking" in prison.

### ***Preparing for release and appearance after prison***

There is a significant relationship between time spent in prison and the value system the women adopted in relation to their appearance. The participants reported changing their more positive outlook to gaining weight and their concept of 'fat bodies' only when they approached the end of their sentence and thus, started to review their appearance and self-identity in relation to pre-existing pressures to conform to outside prison values. According to Wheeler (1961), the process of prisonisation takes the shape of a 'U curve', whereby prisoners appear to conform most closely to the inmate code in the middle of their sentence, being most distant from outside pressures on their identities. However, as prisoners progress towards the end of their sentence and anticipate release, the prison values are replaced with more 'conventional' values with which the prisoner entered prison. Some participants discussed in the interviews the additional anxiety they had felt once they were released from prison due to their increased weight and how that negatively affected their levels of self-confidence.

It's an additional problem ... you put on weight, you don't want to come out [of prison] and look like that ... In the second jail I did get better food and tried to move around more, so I lost a bit of weight. But if I stayed in the first place, I would come

out with more weight on me and that adds to feeling rubbish about yourself. It's not really an ideal way for a fresh start. (Eve)

At first it was OK, but then it got more and more out of control. I'm just not happy with it at all. It affects my everyday life negatively now; there are a lot of things I won't do anymore. If [daughter] asks me, 'oh do you want to go to this place for dinner', I won't go because I don't want people to see me eat and think 'oh look at that fat woman stuffing her face' ... I won't eat in public; I'll only eat with other people when I'm at home. And even if I was starving, I wouldn't eat in public, I won't even say that, like if I'm starving I will never admit that to anyone because they will think 'how can you be starving, look at the size of you'. (Natalie)

At first, I liked that I gained weight because before, I looked like a wreck, I looked skinny, and I was a mess. But then, toward the end of my sentence, nothing fitted me anymore; I started getting rolls of fat so that didn't feel good anymore. And I carried on gaining weight when I came out [of prison] too. You see, you gain an appetite and you are constantly starving. (Fiona)

The anxiety of excess fat is described in the first quotation by Eve as an additional punishment and restraint in allowing ex-prisoners to start afresh and reintegrate smoothly into society. Finding it difficult to make a 'fresh start' due to their weight shows precisely the way in which women perceive their bodies as constituting a mark of their identity and potential to socially reintegrate. Low self-esteem caused from increased body weight is also illustrated in the second quotation where Natalie explains her body-image anxiety as one that transformed into a more expansive social apprehension, isolating her from participating in collective events. Her fear of being judged and being considered a fat woman who cannot control her eating habits shows her struggle to maintain a feminine identity within a regulated setting for contemporary women. This is a setting that not only expects women to be thin, but also requires them not to feel or express hunger, indulgence or immoderation in relation to food (Bordo 2003). Ironically, Natalie's pressure to regulate her eating habits appears to have escalated outside prison, showing the confining nature of society in regard to gender performances and the conflict between social pressures and the body.

The yo-yo effect of changing body size reflects women prisoners' often unbalanced and chaotic lives and is a good example of the physical effect of imprisonment in contributing to shifts in women's lifestyles that do not always aid in creating healthier, sustainable life choices. At the same time, the regular change in physical appearance, particularly the increase or decrease in weight, is common amongst women of all backgrounds (Bordo 2003). Although the participants in this study represent a very particular group of women, it is striking that they have also faced similar struggles to other women when it comes to anxieties about gender, body-image and more broadly their

corporeal identities and social (re)presentation within the heterosexual matrix of consumerist society.

I went up and down during my sentence. When I first went in because of the drink, I bloated out, my face was really fat, but my body was skinny. Then I went very, very skinny, and then I went really quite big. And then, in the last 5 months of sentence I lost all of my weight. (Natasha)

I changed a lot while I was in there. I tried to gain weight when I was thin; I tried to lose weight when I was fat. *I have always been trying*. I think unless you are that stereotypical size 10, you are either trying to put on weight or trying to lose it. If you are the size that everybody perceives as 'normal' then you are fine, nobody expects anything from you. And if you are very skinny you are tormented and if you are heavy you are bullied. (Magda)

Sociologists of health and illness have criticised the current medical fixation with measures of health based on weight and Body Mass Index (BMI) and have portrayed through significant scientific evidence that the regular increase or decrease of weight and the regular practice of dieting that is common among many women can have detrimental long-term effects on their health (Campos 2011).

Although the process of prisonisation and the embrace of an inmate code that varies from outside values, means that many prisoners will at some point, and for a limited period of time, interpret the increase of their size as a positive aspect of their overall identities and prison experiences, this positive approach to the concept of fat is very specific to the experience of a prison sentence. For instance, women in this study recalled how some prisoners would be critical or even bully women who entered prison with excess weight, but would exercise greater tolerance towards those who gained weight as a result of imprisonment, insinuating a shared understanding that the body is subject to the 'pains of imprisonment'. The inmate code thus reflects influences from outside, where perceptions of "normality" and acceptable bodily appearance correspond to gendered assumptions about women's bodies. The shared understanding that the experience of imprisonment changes the body implies that women share an understanding of what imprisonment feels like and how it is embodied.

#### *Embodied stigma: deviance and imprisonment as inscribed on the body*

Anxious preoccupation with one's physical appearance was something that participants claimed persisted after their prison release, highlighting, as Moran (2012) argued, that the inscription of the body by doing time in prison continues during reintegration into society. Specifically, Moran (2012) suggests that women's experiences post-release are as embodied and corporeal as they are in prison.

Indeed, as also shown by Moran (2012), women prisoners leaving prison face several anxieties regarding the *stigma of imprisonment* and more broadly the prejudice of offending attached to them. Being corporeally aware of the marks of such stigma on their bodies, they employ several strategies to conceal their backgrounds as ex-prisoners.

You walk down the street and people look at you, you know, they know you were a waster once, and they go on with their lives, they don't know what it's like to be hungry, they don't know what it's like to go without, and because we haven't got the best of everything, no decent clothes, no opportunities to be tidy and clean [after prison], I feel like everyone is judging you all the time, it's so hard. (Berta)

Sometimes you'd feel the [prison] record is written on your forehead. People can just look at you and tell. And you are frightened certain people will find out, you don't want certain people to know, like my mum doesn't even know I've been to prison, my brother and grandma don't know ... yeah because they'd be really ashamed. (Gemma)

As these participants demonstrate, dealing with such stigma is an emotionally draining experience that perpetuates their sense of isolation. Efforts to conceal their deviant backgrounds mean that women present themselves differently in public space and make efforts to "fit in". They usually focus on presenting their bodies and selves through accepted gender norms and, at the same time, attempt to reintegrate and find jobs through efforts to conceal their health problems and addictions and reconstruct the signs of pain inscribed onto their bodies. The main aim of ex-prisoners is to normalise their appearance in order to look non-criminal and trustworthy. This entails a conscious process of self-surveillance.

Such efforts at reintegration often entail looking less 'different', attempting to make their bodies look like the bodies they are socialised to see as 'normal' and socially acceptable.

When I was stealing, the size of my bag would be bigger; I would wear darker clothes and have my hair down onto my face so that they couldn't tell who I was. I would wear trainers so that I could run if I had to. But since I've been out, I've become 'normal', at least gradually, whatever 'normal' is. Like see now [points to herself] I will wear jewellery, skirts, I'll add more colour. (Denise)

Q: Did you feel that the way you look gave away that you were in prison or that you've offended?

A: You know what, that's a brilliant question, because I've been trying to change the way I look the past few months just to avoid that. I'm forty-two now, so I'm a middle-aged woman, but even 5-6 years ago, I've started to dress differently. Before my first prison sentence, I would always dress as young as possible. When I came out of prison, I made a conscious decision to dress as a middle-aged woman, even before I was. Because I felt that people took me more seriously. I felt I would be less judged, I would have more opportunities, maybe I could even get a job or go places I wouldn't otherwise go to. I've tried to make myself look more 'mumsy', less track suits and trainers and more serious, feminine and pure look. Even the shops I shop from now are more like Marks & Spencer rather than Topshop. I tried to dress a bit

older, because it makes people automatically think you are a different person. Before when I dressed like a young girl ... I got more ... well, certain people around here know I shoplift anyway, but even if I went to another town, if I dressed that way, I would get followed in a shop anyway. If I dress the way I do now, even here where people know I used to shoplift, people don't recognise me anymore, because after prison I look fatter, I dress more feminine, I look more normal I guess. (Alicia)

Dress, in particular, being an aspect of physical appearance that is relatively easy to control and alter, was used by participants to conceal their background identities and to present themselves as "normal". The participants tended to compare themselves to a notional "average" or "normal" woman, who was attributed features of hyper-femininity, seriousness and composure. In terms of age, some chose to deny the popular desire to appear younger. Paradoxically, the attempt to look "non-criminal" and normal also entails an attempt to look more confident and experienced through, for example, the use of jewellery or colourful clothing, and at the same time, appear older and mature and therefore, not necessarily attractive or sexy in the stereotypical heterosexual sense.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has shown that performances of self-identity are actively inscribed by regimes of care-taking and has suggested that physical appearance in prison is an essential technique of socialisation and acquiring status within inmate culture. Women's sense of femininity inside prison is compromised, demanding them to find new means with which to both perform selfhood and cope with prison. Through the example of two crucial prison moments, canteen day and visiting days, the role of gender in prison has been considered in this chapter through a spatio-temporal perspective that is constantly negotiated by the inmates. This allows them moments when they can perform their out-of-prison identities. Moreover, clothing and the use of particular types of fashion within prison has been discussed as a central theme of the daily experience of self in prison. The on-going regulation, monitoring and control of women's bodies require them to devise new ways with which to strike a balance between the demands of their prison structures and inmate culture.

The chapter has suggested that as a changing embodied identity, the prisoner's identity is experienced as an ambivalent, fluid and often untrustworthy site of selfhood. The effects of imprisonment on the presentation of self are also extended to the participants' lives after prison, where they explain how the stigma of imprisonment and offending is actively concealed and masked through changes to their bodies. This suggests that while the body is an ambivalent and untrustworthy site, it is also the participants' main means of experiencing and dealing with the world. Their bodies allow them to present themselves in

ways that they perceive to be most appropriate, showing that as active body-subjects, women can resist their oppression and present themselves as “normal” or average women. Nevertheless, through a consideration of time and space in the experience of imprisonment, and also in the broader life narratives of the participants, it becomes evident that, although often empowered and active, women are overall targeted by the prison as victims of a double oppression that attacks both their gendered identities and their individual sense of self.

## Chapter 7

### Coping with punishment: Emotions, bodies and surviving the ‘pains of imprisonment’

By forming coalitions with those inside, by listening to them,  
and by bearing witness to their experience,  
scholars may draw attention to their basic humanity.  
And this, after all, is often what is lost in public discussion  
on crime and punishment. (Bosworth et al. 2005: 261-2)

Chapter 7 considers how the prisoner *cope*s with the ‘pains of imprisonment’. It argues that coping in prison relies on practices that engage the prisoner’s body in a paradoxical manner. Coping, it is argued, entails acting *for* and *against* one’s own body. To demonstrate this, the chapter considers various coping strategies that are arguably self-harming. Such self-harming strategies include prisoners’ attitudes towards eating, drug use, and self-injury. Less harmful yet arguably equally isolating strategies are also considered with reference to bodily care in prison.

For most of the women interviewed, recollecting the experience of imprisonment was far from a nostalgic, fond memory. Including those women who felt that prison was a safer place than the streets, all of the participants were eager to explain that they did not intend to return to prison because the experience was either ‘too harmful’, ‘depressing’, ‘horrible’, or ‘pure punishment’; because prison did not resonate with ‘normal life’, ‘life with responsibilities and freedoms’; or because prison limited future opportunities, particularly in terms of employment. Prison was also reported to have a lasting impact in terms of changing family relations and often altering women’s entire lives as they previously knew them, perpetuating feelings of isolation and loneliness. When asked to talk about their bodies, almost all of the participants mentioned how the psychological impact of imprisonment appeared visible *on* their bodies, or how these emotional pains were realised and expressed *through* their bodies.

This chapter starts by discussing examples of embodied coping and techniques of emotional survival in prison, including a discussion on prison food, eating, the emotions attached to it and the organisation of time and space around meal times. This is followed by a discussion on how emotions are articulated in the prison context, suggesting that the concept of ‘embodied thought’ (Ahmed 2004), and more generally feminist theories of *affect* and phenomenological accounts in the sociology of emotions, can help us to understand the emotional effects of imprisonment and their embodied expression. This leads to



consideration of the specific features of *painful experience* in prison and the role of the body in living through both emotional and physical pain. It explores the use of illicit drugs and prescribed medication as attempts to leave the body's spatial reality and transcend the walls of the prison. This is followed by an explanation of how the participants conceptualised their time in prison through "embodied emotion work", which leads to a review of the practice and experience of self-injury in prison. The next section then returns to discussions found in Chapters 5 and 6 to illustrate how strategies of body-care are used by participants as a means of coping and differentiation from other inmates which result in the stigmatisation and isolation of certain prisoners.

### **7.1 Prison food as comfort, pleasure and bodily distraction**

Arguably, approaching the concept of food as something more than nutrition consumed for the maintenance of life, can help account for the equally important role of food as a representation and performance of certain lifestyles, and as a crucial facilitator of social interaction. Existing prisons research has acknowledged this social function of prison food (e.g. Godderis 2006a; 2006b; Smith 2002). However, there is little research on the psychosomatic experience of eating, and the emotional relationship between food and the individual as observed in prisons.

Anthropologists of food and eating have expanded their understanding of what constitutes food and have shown how different cultures affect not only eating practices, but also notions of what is and what is not food, along with the varying judgements made in relation to the flavour and making of food (Mintz 1994; Mintz and Du Bois 2002). Similarly, different types of food serve different roles in our material and emotional lifestyles, and as has often been stated in this and other studies, there is a qualitative difference for women prisoners between the food provided daily by the prison and the food they can independently purchase from the canteen or, when possible, the food that women can prepare individually in their wings or cells (for examples with male prisoners, see Ugelvik 2011; Valentine and Longstaff 1998). What is clear about food, therefore, is that it has a strong *symbolic value* in the representation of selfhood and individuality, as well as enabling a sense of social belonging, both in and out of prison. For instance, a person's ability to choose her own food, buy it with her own money and consume it at a time of her own choosing, depicts food as not only a substance required for mere survival, but also as a tool for the expression of individuality, independence, consumption and, for some, even gender liberation. For women, particularly, the symbolic value of food has significant gender connotations, making

the preparation and eating of an essential element of some women's sense of being. Many of the questionnaire participants in this study expressed their dissatisfaction with the provision of food in prison (as all interview participants in this and other studies did), however, this distaste was explained by the questionnaire participants as a problem of 'lack of control', highlighting the link between emotions and daily routines in prison.

The fact that many prisoners are not directly involved in preparing their own food caused uncertainty about its quality, taste and hygiene, but also reflected women's sense of disempowerment. They felt that their gender roles were demeaned when they were not trusted with kitchen utensils to make their own food in the prison wing or cells. Some participants expressed the wish to have small units with kitchens available to prisoners so that they could prepare their own meals. One questionnaire participant compared the enclosed environment of the prison with the domestic elements of a 'home', but explained that food symbolises precisely why prison can never feel like home, emphasising the prison's fundamentally punitive structure:

They need to understand we can't just transform into [being] *just* prisoners. When I was out I had a house to take care of, kids to feed, we all had *real* lives. You can see girls [in prison] try to make the place look like home [...] you have to feel like this is home otherwise [sentence incomplete]. [But] they can't just expect we won't do anything when on the outside we had responsibilities and they won't even let us cook our food. They feed us disgusting food [and] they won't even trust us with a knife [...] [in here] you can't get up in the morning go to the kitchen, make yourself breakfast. [Then,] you won't make a groceries list and go the shop, or cook for your family. They do everything they can to remind you [you're] alone [in prison]. (Q-Maria)

Food and rituals of food preparation and eating entail a multi-faceted nature that is both culturally embedded and socially contingent (DeVault 2008; de Certeau and Giard 2008; Julier 2008). The participant quoted above demonstrates food's symbolic value in the making of daily routines (i.e. time for shopping, preparing food, laying the dinner table) and explains that her social being is compromised as a result of her lack of control over these food-related times and rituals. In her contrast with 'home', the prison space is presented as an asocial space that promotes feelings of loneliness and idleness. She illustrates that once her value as a responsible care-taker was denied, her feelings of loneliness and purposelessness make the passing of time and the living within prison space a particularly painful experience.

Moreover, the relationship between food consumption, eating and femininity has been approached by feminist theorists (Bordo 1990; 1999a; 2003; Barky 2008; Germov and Williams 2008; Lupton 1996) as a relationship that corresponds to the late modern struggle

of women to restrain their food intake and exercise self-control when it comes to eating, both in terms of food quantities and in certain prohibited food types (e.g. desserts, carbohydrates or fast-food products). Meanwhile, the idea of eating for pleasure and not just for survival, and the idea of indulging in an array of available foods are again intrinsic parts of our consumerist cultures. The gendered expectation of women to practice regular restraint, while at the same time being the primary providers of food to others, reflects the challenging contradiction of their contemporary social lives and poses a psychological minefield for many women (Bordo 2003). This challenge to the relationship between women's gender roles and their eating practices also affects women prisoners (see Section 6.2).

The interview participants approached eating mainly as a practice that reflected their strategies of coping with life in prison. Such coping included their attempts to gain some sense of pleasure in a deliberately austere environment or to inflict self-punishment on their bodies through the consumption of "unhealthy" food or food restraint. However, their reflections focused strongly on the *effects* of prison food and eating in prison, which varied from emotional-psychological to bodily and physiological *changes* in body size. Those participants who entered prison with a drug addiction experienced both a physical and an emotional transformation towards food (Chapter 5). These women experienced the feeling of hunger often for the first time in a long time which in part explains the significant increase in weight among many women prisoners (Plugge et al. 2006). The role of food from the perspective of the prison was also commented on by the questionnaire participants, who pointed to food's role in keeping prisoners 'calm', 'lethargic' and compliant, acknowledging its disciplinary function in the highly controlled and secure space of the prison.

### ***Doing time and eating: food as coping***

All of the participants explained that food was a potential source of pleasure, partly because it gave them *something to do*. The organisation of prison's everyday routine around meal times means that food assumes a symbolic function, representing the passage of time. Indeed food was described as a form of "doing time":

It's so boring the food in there, it gets so repetitive. But at the same time, it is something to do, when you got nothing else to do, you eat. (Laura)

You get tired of it. I gave up eating. The last few weeks, I hardly ate. I was just so tired of it. I was getting so big as well and I was desperate to lose weight. So I went on a diet. If I did eat, I'd eat only salads, and that was just so that I'd have something to do, something to plan the day around. (Yolanda)

“Doing time” through the organisation of meal times is a result of the timetabled organisation of prison life. Unsurprisingly, with the passage of long periods of time, and as prisoners progress with their custodial sentences, the relief of boredom and the degree of pleasure that can be gained from prison food decreases. Indeed, as time goes by, food becomes the cause of additional anxiety in regard to doing time. As the participants explain, the repetitiveness of meal times and of particular food types starts to symbolically denote the passage of long, repetitive periods of wasted time, emphasising how the experience of time within prison attains a new meaning from that of subjective temporality outside (Leder 2004). Instead of giving way to fresh developments, new opportunities or unpredicted events (as is regularly the case outside prison), time inside is regulated by institutional cycles and repetitions. In this case, the passing of time no longer represents the *moving of time* towards a future (Heidegger 1962; Leder 2004), but renders *being in prison as meaningless*, where the discipline of bodies in time and space operates around regressive cycles of temporality.

#### *Dinner times*

Meal times, however, do not reflect only the organisation of prisoners as instigated by the prison. Food also plays a significant part in the daily interactions among prisoners and has a symbolic function within prisoner culture. This is not necessarily due to food’s particular quality in itself, but rather to the importance of eating for prisoners, giving food a prison-specific value (Godderis 2006a; 2006b; Smith 2002). Although outside prison, eating has been referred to, both by sociologists and anthropologists of food, as an increasingly social encounter; in prison, meal times can either be crucial periods of interaction among prisoners or they can develop into lonely events where prisoners choose to eat on their own.

The officers wouldn’t do anything unless a punch was thrown, like if they were screaming or shouting at each other, they would leave them to it [...] because you’d have your dinner in the wing, and two of the prisoners are serving and they give the best bits to their friends. (Fiona)

In the block they put me in at the beginning, you go down and have your dinner with everyone, but in the main wing ... you don’t want to go down there, you don’t want to look at someone the wrong way. But then again, you didn’t want to look too intimidated; you needed to find that balance. It was that kind of atmosphere you didn’t know when it was going to kick off, so we used to take our dinner up to our rooms and eat on our own. (Laura)

I was lucky because I worked in the kitchen so I got a first pick of everything. And you get leftovers too[...] But in the wing, we could make what we want, like put a jacket potato in the microwave and have it with some cheese, but that’s only because we were on the main serve job, which is the big kitchens. So if we didn’t like the main food, because we were already in the kitchen, we could make whatever we wanted, so in terms of jobs, that’s a key job in prison. (Natasha)

For some inmates, meal times were a cause for anxiety as the fear of insecurity from other prisoners is intensified with the congregation of the entire wing during a highly volatile time in the day. Instead of contributing to an opportunity to associate, meal times highlight the differences among groups of women prisoners and demonstrate the function and operation of various intra-culture prisoner hierarchies. While friendship in prison has been reported as an important means of coping for both female and male inmates (Genders and Player 1987; Crewe 2007b; 2009; Carrabine and Longhurst 1998), it is also accurate to observe that social exposure within prison can add to the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes 1958). Some prisoners are clearly more dominant and aggressive than others, but social status appears to depend not only on character or in-prison charisma, but also on the prisoner's position within the daily structure and organisation of the prison. As Natasha illustrates, working in the kitchen gave her a privilege in terms of preparing her own food and deciding what to eat every day. And as Fiona explains with another example, those prisoners responsible for serving food in the wing were empowered by the highly valuable role that food plays in the lives of prisoners. By privileging their peers in terms of food quality or portion sizes, they can decide which prisoner will appear most favoured and dominant. Giving food such a symbolic value resonates with that of currency exchange outside.

#### *Racial identity and eating attitudes*

Being a key tool for the communication of selfhood and social relations, food and eating are important elements of gender identity, and national, cultural/racial and religious identities. All of the participants explained that their prisons made some efforts to accommodate specific diets, particularly the observance of religious food. According to prison rules, diversity in religious and cultural diets is a requirement that must be met by every prison:

The menu choices and meal provision reflect religious and cultural needs of the establishment. Distinctly separate tools are identified and used at the point of service for the serving of Halal meals. (Ministry of Justice 2008: 2)

Some participants mentioned that in their prison, efforts were made to promote cultural awareness through the occasional provision of different cuisines, but complained that the options available in the canteen, which provided their only opportunity to practice 'choice' by purchasing goods, did not reflect equal diversity. Some other participants mentioned that they would appreciate more the efforts to raise cultural awareness through food if they were directly involved in cooking and learning about diversity through food preparation in active collaboration with other prisoners. Although the size of the present sample of participants does not allow for generalisation, it should be noted that those who felt most dispossessed of

their gender roles as care-takers, and the questionnaire participants who expressed dissatisfaction with their lack of involvement in the preparation of their own food, came mostly from ethnic minority groups and many were older prisoners, illustrating the more obvious sense of marginalisation felt by specific groups of inmates. This denotes the particular effects that imprisonment can have on minority groups of women whose imported characteristics may be severely challenged by the social structures of the prison (Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2005).

Eight out of twenty-four interview participants in this study were from ethnic minority groups and felt that although there was evidence of cultural diversity in the food provision, this was not necessarily reflected in regard to different ethnic groups' health needs. As Katherine explained:

it's not that they didn't worry about being diverse, or equal, they just don't know what they are dealing with [...] some of us, [individual] women can't eat some stuff, not because it's our religion, but because it *doesn't feel good* [...] some women in prison are sick, some got stomach problems, some are too old to eat some foods, some got no teeth to eat, and some of us never ate any of the stuff they gave us before...Or, it's hard, because sometimes just knowing that I could 'cook that better' could really put you down in prison. (Katherine)

This participant highlights the significance of *particular* experiences that cannot be generalised into universal understandings of gender, culture or race. Yet, the expectation to practise self-discipline and self-control in the prison context does not seem to be met with opportunities to practise such individual responsibility, making the contradictions of the prison's social structures particularly painful for women's self-perceptions and social roles. The symbolic significance of food, and the rituals of both preparing and eating it, are 'based on an individual's cultural, political and familial heritage' (Godderis 2006b: 61), constituting essential elements of the organisation of everyday life, as well as the making and representation of individual and collective identities (Tisdale 2000). In her investigation of how prison authorities inflict power through the symbolic function of food, Godderis argues, 'because food is such a central part of daily prison routine and because it acts as a powerful symbol of identity, the consumption of food is an excellent means through which to express power in prison' (Godderis 2006b: 62).

### ***Emotions and eating***

The symbolic value of food in prison is such that all of the participants referred to food and eating (or not) as an experience that was closely related to their emotions. Some participants explained that their emotional distress as a result of receiving a custodial sentence was so unbearable that they lost their appetite and consciously refused to eat:

I can't really say much about the food in prison, you see, most of the time I didn't eat. I would eat only basic things like chicken; I guess I was unhappy that I didn't know how it was made, that I couldn't make my own food. But anyway, I was feeling so low and depressed, I felt sick most of the time and it put me off food. (Olga)

I lost weight in prison; it's not that I didn't like the food though. It's what happens when I'm upset. So in prison I lost my appetite, they didn't give me any medication for depression. I kept telling them I feel depressed and I can't eat, but they just told me to call the Samaritans [...] In general, I tried not eating just to lose weight, I would starve myself *out* of prison to keep thin. But in prison it wasn't a diet, I was just really that low. (Hayley)

While the control of food intake outside prison may have been used as a means of controlling weight and adhering to gendered norms in regard to size, the very experience of imprisonment could be said to both suspend outside pressures and gendered oppression whilst simultaneously contributing additional 'pains of imprisonment'.

This form of double oppression, however, is not only visible through the emotional loss of appetite. Most participants used eating, and often over-eating, as a technique of coping with the distress of imprisonment. Although the effects of unhealthy eating tended to contribute to anxiety about body-image and depression, the pleasure acquired from comfort food bought from the canteen had a significant emotional function in assuaging some of the emotional 'pains of imprisonment'.

In prison I ate out of boredom, I used to buy biscuits and crisps from the canteen. It was complete comfort eating. And the food they served was always in big portions too. Having that kind of food, you know, sweets, it was pure satisfaction and a feeling a bit naughty too, but it was mostly a pleasure thing. I didn't try to punish myself, it was punishment enough to be in there and sometimes food was all we had. (Denise)

We would buy crisps and chocolate [from the canteen]...*that's one day, everyone is in a good mood there. So that* kind of food helps. It's a comfort thing. Remember when they changed the cakes [asks Anna.]? Everyone got so excited, it's only a *change of meal*, but because it's so repetitive, when they changed one little thing, everyone wanted seconds, no one had seconds for months! (Berta).

As Berta explains, the prisoners varied their emotional attachment to food across different types of food. Institutional food raised feelings of anxiety, depression and distaste, in terms of flavour and its negative consequences in contributing to increased weight. The treats that they could purchase from the canteen, on the other hand, caused them euphoric feelings associated with personal choice to indulge and enjoy particular flavours. Although unhealthy and fattening, these comfort foods had pleasurable emotional effects and were not associated with increase in weight or self-punishment. This approach to comfort food, which the participants acknowledged was not "healthy", is reminiscent of attitudes towards self-injury,

where participants associated their practices with both a need to regain control and a need for ‘release’ and indulgence (see Section 7.3).

### **7.2 Drug use: getting out of prison through the body**

The illegal use and distribution of drugs in prison takes on a similar role to prison food: it becomes a valuable resource for coping, and access to it can elevate a prisoner’s social status (Crewe 2011; Kalinich 1980). The space limitations, as well as the simplicity of lifestyle that prison entails, replaces the complex values of the outside market economy with consumerist values that are specific to immediate bodily satisfaction. This is because other material representations of status are not as readily available as they are outside. Therefore, the direct ability to enjoy better quality food or have access to illegal drugs illustrates the significance of physical pleasure and indulgence in prison. Ironically, these are respected values in the prison culture, while outside prison such emotional relationships to foods or other substances are often frowned upon or perceived as obsessional behaviours.

As Crewe (2012) explains, drugs are an integral element of prisoner society. They can assuage stress and they can allow a “psychological” escape from the prison environment. Prisoners often refer to the use of drugs inside prison as a survival strategy through which they aim to transcend the walls of the prison and, through the effects of intoxication, imagine and feel as if they are outside prison. The participants in this study seemed to understand this motivation behind the use of drugs in prison. Although not all of the participants admitted to using drugs during their sentence, all of them explained that it was relatively easy to find and use drugs in their establishments.

Passing time was the main reason used to explain the popularity of legal drugs such as tobacco. Participants described that, like comfort food, smoking gives prisoners something to do, implying that the idleness they felt in prison was something that needed survival strategy. As Eve clarified, smoking also allowed for women to interact and, much like food, it served a social and symbolic function. Illicit drug use, on the other hand, tended to be a more private activity in which prisoners engaged in secret or in isolation from other inmates or staff. The sole purpose and urge to use such drugs were to experience their euphoric effects and the possibility they provided, on a symbolic and psychological level, to transcend and “escape” the prison environment. Enabling this purely disembodied effect of escape, pleasure and indulgence through drug use therefore meant that the prisoner’s body was used as platform for escaping the prison on a non-corporeal level.



Much like self-injury practices, drug use was explained by some participants as a way to attain a feeling of ‘release’ where they felt more ‘relaxed’, serene or passive. One participant also mentioned that drug use provided an interruption from personal reflection and deep emotional engagement with her situation, feelings or deeds (Fiona). Moreover, Regina explained that drugs allowed for a less concerned and self-judgemental attitude, which could briefly elicit much needed feelings of confidence. She related her eagerness to experience brief moments of confidence to the general lack of control and purposelessness she felt inside prison. Inmates often talk about using drugs as a means of leaving the prison ‘through their heads’, implying the embodiment of their imprisonment, but also the role of their bodies (including their minds) as the main source of relief from this embodied punishment. The use of drugs in prison could be described as a form of self-harm that takes place in an attempt to practice self-help, pointing to an indirect harm of imprisonment that relies significantly on a conscious infliction of harm onto the body.

The distribution and use of drugs inside prison is strongly linked in men’s prisons with hierarchies, status and the overall interactions prisoners engage in<sup>60</sup>. Crewe explains this in regard to male prisoners:

Prisoners who deal drugs within prison are able to accumulate a considerable amount of power by taking advantage of [the] demand [for drugs]. The power that they wield is not exactly the same as ‘respect’ [...] Drug users in prison generate the opposite sentiments. They are disliked in part because of a widespread aversion to the acts that drug addicts engage in outside prison [...] Within the prison, drug users breach a number of norms that make collective living more manageable ... Drug use can therefore undermine the status of men who might otherwise be respected. (Crewe 2012: 33)

Smuggling drugs inside, or selling prescription medication to other inmates, is a source of power owing to the popularity of drugs in prison. Having said this, many of the participants, in this study, who took the opportunity to detoxify from drugs in prison, explained that the availability of drugs and their exploitation by powerful inmates was an additional pain of imprisonment, adding to their daily stress and challenging their recovery or exacerbating their withdrawal symptoms (Anna and Berta). This was also a view expressed by women who did not use drugs prior to imprisonment. Hayley, for example, mentioned that the availability of illicit drugs in prison required her to practice increased self-control and resilience to avoid them, which was particularly difficult in light of what she described as the prison’s ‘drug-friendly’ culture and environment.

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<sup>60</sup> However, such commercial exchange is not conclusively evident in women’s prisons where, as some evidence suggests, there is also an attitude of mutual help among the inmates (Bosworth 1999).

### **7.3 Emotions, pain and punishment: Self-injury as ‘emotion work’**

Approaching the *affective* elements of imprisonment and the role of prisoner emotions in the experience of custody is feasible, this thesis argues, through an embodied concept of emotions. Sociologists have articulated these as ‘embodied existential modes of being’ (Williams and Bendelow 1998: 138), while feminist theory of ‘affect’ has considered the socio-historical and embodied dimensions of emotions (Ahmed 2004) which include, but also go beyond, a merely sensory or cognitive perspective. For this reason, recent psychological and social theoretical analyses of emotions suggest that we try to understand them as ‘narrative plots’ (Sarbin 2001: 217) rather than as quantifiable, cranial or visceral objects. As this thesis has also shown, being inter-subjective, emotions are not necessarily measurable, rendering the understanding of emotions entailed in the experience of prison pain difficult to constitute into quantifiable harms (Liebling and Maruna 2005). Moreover, unlike other sensory elements of imprisonment, the emotions that are felt during imprisonment are not necessarily left behind upon release. Emotions entail a socio-historical dimension that does not only affect the individual momentarily, but (re)constitutes her sense of being and has an ongoing effect. Thus, emotions are not only experiences that ‘happen’ to us, but they are active means by which we engage with the world and cope with our lived experiences (Solomon 1993). Although the impact of emotions, including their intensity, may be contingent on the passage of time, the present study suggests that their relevance remains significant to the self-identity of the ex-prisoner. The women’s reflections on the emotions of imprisonment imply that they are forms of trauma which persist after release.

Liebling (1999; 2001) has correctly suggested that if we engage more profoundly with the affective elements of imprisonment and the harms caused by the various ‘pains of imprisonment’, we will be closer to understanding the actual experience of prisoners. What the present thesis wishes to expand upon is the perspective from which this may become methodologically and theoretically possible. It is argued that the *embodied basis* of emotions should form the foundation upon which prisons research seeks to observe, appreciate and interpret these emotions.

The participants discussed painful experience in the prison context with reference to feelings of shame; guilt; isolation and loneliness; fear, anxiety and purposelessness; depression and emptiness; boredom and lack of self-respect. Participants also described the experience of “doing time” as emotionally volatile.

It's [imprisonment] not a way of life is it? They are telling you what to do and you do it, they control what time you get up and what you do, they control what time you have outside and how much money, they control what you drink and how much you eat. Just the control of it all can drive you crazy. The main feeling for me was a constant *sense of restraint*, so much that you feel like running through the walls, breaking everything... it's that inside prison you are *controlled all the time, it's like there's no time to breathe*. [...] Eventually you *don't feel you anymore*, you turn your life into that routine, and you just do as you are told. (Natasha)

Describing daily bodily controls and timetabled arrangements, Natasha showed how monitoring and regulation impacts her body and is therefore a form of disciplining reflected *through* her body. Her feeling of 'restraint' is described in terms of her desire to transcend the boundaries of prison space. She also spoke of the need to experience self-control and freedom in relation to the essential life force of 'breathing', alluding to the corporeal impact of the deprivation of liberty and movement in prison. Much like the body, emotions can also be changed and institutionalised. As Natasha reflected, feelings of emptiness and withdrawal together with a sense of selflessness develop over time. Emotions of imprisonment are therefore fluid and contingent on the passage of time. They undergo moments of authenticity but can turn into instituted feelings of *disaffect*. Through a process of prisonisation, Natasha's emotional turmoil succumbed to a dispassionate acceptance of her prisoner identity.

Indeed many participants mentioned that their "real" sense of punishment was inflicted on them by themselves, through the time they put into thinking about their past. These deliberations often induced chronic feelings of shame, guilt and disgust that challenged self-esteem and fomented distrust of the self. These feelings were produced *from within the self* and were *directed at the self*. Again, this internal exchange of painful emotion was experienced in an embodied manner:

I would spend hours in my cell alone, I had to think, I wanted to and at the same time I resented having to think, so that's how the self-cutting started, you know, trying to avoid the thinking. It meant accepting what happened, what harm I caused and how I had to pay for it, it meant reevaluating my life. I couldn't sleep or eat because of all the thinking, I barely left my cell, and I really just couldn't bring myself to get out of bed most days. I was really that low ... and there's nobody who can really help you, it's just a painful time you have to be with yourself, your worst enemy. (Regina)

Regina's strategy of coping and getting through her painful experiences entailed a process of disengagement with the inmate world to manage a deeper connection with her own sense of being. Her need to practise self-injury exemplifies how difficult this process of reflection can be and how the body may act as both a source of relief and an inescapable reminder of inner turmoil.

### *Self-injury: embodying pain*

Four of the fourteen participants<sup>61</sup> who self-injured had used self-injury as a coping strategy before experiencing prison and continued to self-injure during their sentence. Ten participants practiced self-injury only during their time in custody, explaining that the emotional strain of imprisonment was such that bodily harm was a technique for feeling self-control and release. Six of these participants continued to practice self-injury in the community. Those who only started to self-injure when in prison explained this mainly by reference to emotions related to the ‘pains of imprisonment’. Participants who self-injured before prison, however, displayed a more self-punitive attitude that connected with, but also transcended, their imprisonment.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, some women revealed their scars during the interview, making even this process a deeply embodied experience. Laura described her self-injury prior to imprisonment as a form of expression, release, self-punishment and catharsis:

I don't know how to explain things, sometimes *I feel things I can't express*. That's why I know hurting myself [through self-injury] helps. What I used to do before prison was take, you know those big syringes? I would take many of those and find all the big veins in my body and I would suck blood from any big vein I could find; as much blood as I could get out, I would try to suck it all out of me, it was like self-punishment, a release. I was trying to get rid of '*bad blood*'. To me it was like, I knew I'd done bad things, done drugs, done crime, I hurt people, so I would try to get rid of the bad blood, I wanted all the bad to go away... In that sense, the prison could never punish me as much as I punished myself. They [assume that] ... we can't reflect... we don't know what it means we did. Prison could definitely do nothing to me in comparison to what I did to myself. (Laura)

Laura actualised her pain and disappointment in self through a process of *acting towards the self/body* (Leder 1990), trying to take ‘the bad blood’ away as if erasing her experiences through embodied catharsis. As Leder (1990) explains in relation to the body in pain, Laura's narration presents us with a process of engagement with her embodied self and an intense awareness of her embodied existence in the world. At the same time, her emotional turmoil was expressed through self-injury in a process of fracture between her self and her body. In an attempt to both relieve herself from her feelings of anxiety and shame, but also to alleviate the emotional pain her experiences caused her, Laura described the centrality of her embodiment in experiencing her emotional pain. Her corporeal self-punitiveness confronts the punishment of the prison to show how imprisonment entails an active negotiation between punisher and punished.

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<sup>61</sup> The thesis focuses its discussion on self-injury solely on the interviews with ex-prisoners.

Those participants whose self-injury started during imprisonment explained it as a reaction to prison-specific emotions. They referred to their sense of solitude and separation from loved ones, their lack of self-control and regulation inside prison.

Yeah, it started in prison ... It started because I was far away from my family, I felt alone and helpless, I didn't want to be in prison, so I used a razor. When you first go in, they ... ask you if you self-harm and I said no. And so they gave me a razor to shave when [I] shower, so I used that. But then one night I cut myself too deep, and I was bleeding too much, so I pressed the buzzer. They kept asking me how I did it, I wouldn't tell them at first, but then ... the nurse told the officers [...] Most of the times I did it, it didn't even help me to be honest ... *it helped to watch it happen* I guess, *to see the blood run, to know I could do it*, that helped for a bit. (Tanya)

As research also confirms, the visual act of cutting the flesh enhanced feelings of release and empowerment (Chandler et al. 2011; Chandler 2012). Coping with the 'pains of imprisonment' involves an internalised set of strategies for women prisoners who, unlike men, are less likely to collectively riot or publically express their emotional turmoil (Liebling 1994). Therefore, the practice of self-injury in this context is significantly correlated with the injurer's gender and her past experiences. Being a gender-related form of coping, this practice above all others illustrates how the experience of imprisonment is an embodying one for women, whose socialisation often leaves them with a lack of voice in the public domain. Women are socially inscribed as overtly emotional and "naturally" weak (Grosz 1994), rendering their bodies as separate from their minds and impoverished in their capacities (Bartky 1990; Bordo 1996; 1999a). This provides women prisoners with a 'legitimate' gendered form of expression in self-injury. For example, a number of participants referred to their helplessness in verbally expressing their prison pains.

### *Shared bodies*

Usually, self-injury is experienced as a *private activity*, practised backstage in an attempt to alleviate emotional issues that are often derived from the public sphere (Goffman 1959; Chandler 2012). However, prison is a place of compromised privacy, an aspect of imprisonment that is of central relevance to women prisoners (Carlen 1998). It is therefore interesting that prisoners still find the means, the unregimented time and the privacy to engage in self-injury, emphasising the immense sense of agency and resistance entailed in achieving it. Indeed, the obstacles that exist in the controlled setting of the prison may even exacerbate the motivation to practise self-injury and contribute to a heightened sense of self-control (Leaf and Schrock 2011). However, the prevalence of this intimate and private practice within prisons turns into a significantly *shared* and collective experience of the 'pains of imprisonment':

And in the main wing, nearly everyone I met had self-harm marks all over their bodies; they had slashes on their arms, scratches, deep wounds. *That*, that was very disturbing to see, especially when you first walk in, because you think, god is it going to be that bad? Is it so bad *we all have to do this* to ourselves? (Emily)

Sometimes you would *hear it*. You hear them crying in their cells, screaming, punching and throwing things all over the place, *and we know [...]* [and] then sometimes not hearing anything is a sign too, *silence is not a good sign in prison ...* it would just be the buzzer and then officers running down and we knew what it's all about. (Alicia)

In the context of the prison, self-injurers are not only making a statement to themselves: their practice becomes a public expression of a *shared pain*. As the participants explain, everybody understood why it was happening and when, engaging in a shared appreciation of how emotional pain is inscribed on the body and expressed through it. As Alicia describes, this practice entailed a shared embodied reality, where sensory signs such as noise/silence, allowed other prisoners to be aware of the self-injurer's practice and, in consequence, of her pain. The temporal element of this practice (usually practised at night-time), the spatial elements (practised in the privacy of the cell or shower) but also its means of inscribing the body through pain and scars, make the practice of self-injury in prisons a shared embodied experience. It is an experience that in prison exists between the private and the public and it entails a social dimension. As an embodied practice, therefore, it is constituted by and constitutes the prison space.

### *Scarred bodies*

The participants explained that the scars left on their bodies act as reminders of their painful experiences and mark their self-presentation. Often self-injury scars are concealed after imprisonment, as these are considered stigmatising symbols of deviance and imprisonment.

Definitely, I think about [the scars] a lot. Because I have scars from using [drugs], I have scars from cutting and scratching myself, my body is just covered in all sorts of wounds. So I always have to cover myself. My daughter hasn't seen them, I always hide it, I will never wear anything that will let it show, my partner has seen it, which isn't ... well, I obviously don't feel very sexy, I mean, look [rolls her jeans up to show me scars on her legs] that doesn't look very sexy, does it?... I know that's not what most girls look like. It sets me apart and not even in a good way. (Magda)

The scars Magda carries on her body stigmatise her in a gendered manner. She articulates that the "look" of her body and her presentation of self, compromise her gender identity by compromising her ability to enact her role as heterosexual partner and mother. She compares her body to that of other women, emphasising her sense of otherness in bodily terms, separating her from a gender reality that she considers normal or average. Her feelings about

herself are mediated by social expectations about women's representation, demonstrating not only the corporeal nature of her emotions, but also their social resonance.

The marks that self-injury scars leave on the body are time-specific. Participants describing or showing me their scars referred to them in relation to the 'passage of time', attaching a symbolic value to their temporality:

I got quite a lot of scars. Here, you can see them all over me [shows me her arms]. It really used to affect me; I would be all about hiding them, now I'm getting over it a little because you can tell they are *old scars*, you can tell I don't do it as much anymore. But when they were redder, more prominent, when they were fresh, I was very conscious, I wouldn't wear short-sleeved tops, even in hot weather, I would keep my arms and legs covered, even my neck I had to have covered up. But some of these marks will never go away so I have to deal with it [...] I used to think people would look at me and think I'm a freak, like tell I wasn't normal. Nobody else other than the girls in prison looked like this, so I knew it was something wrong. (Natasha)

Natasha's scars act as a reminder of her past emotions, extending them into her present self-presentation. Her body contributes to a sense of shame and embarrassment, as these marks denote an 'abnormality' that separates her from the rest. This dominant sense of self-stigmatisation explained by the participants alludes to an internalised moral standard of femininity and its more broadly acceptable physical representation (Goffman 1959; 1963; Bordo 2003). Similarly to other stigma inscribed on the body (e.g. Moran 2012), scars from self-injury are signs of deviance that are difficult to conceal and often become permanent reminders of a punitive past.

#### **7.4 Survival through body "care"**

Theories of the body have been criticised for reducing individuals merely to their corporeal existence, prioritising their physical-biological needs. This 'inverted Cartesianism' (Schulz 1986 cited in Shilling 2008:125) may be problematic for an academic understanding of social life, but arguably it is still relevant in understanding the social function of the body in political economy (Shilling 2008: 125). Extreme environments, like those created in the Holocaust camps under the Nazis or the Stalinist Gulags, directed their techniques of punishment, humiliation and dehumanisation to their inmates' bodies. These inmates were 'condemned to inhabit a social and physical environment in which the basics of biological life became central preoccupations' (2008: 126). Survivors' accounts illustrate the debilitating circumstances they survived, but also evidence their unique survival strategies, courage and collective acts of belonging and morality. As Shilling (2008) discusses, these demonstrate that:

camp-life, was an embodied experience characterised by a definite *social* (as well as physical) structure ... People's corporeal capacities enabled them to continue living as social beings ... This transcendence developed by *attending to*, not ignoring, the physicality of embodied existence. (Shilling 2008: 126, emphasis in original)

Basic survival needs were deprived in these camps, but apart from purely corporeal suffering, camp-life entailed an 'enormous shock to [the inmates'] identities and threatened their pre-existing sense of self' with the risk of 'total psychological disintegration' (2008: 130). Similarly, and as Foucault (1979) argues and Howe (1994) expands, the target of punitive institutions like the prison is the prisoner's body as object.

Precisely because the body-object is the target of such punishment and confinement, it has also been clear from camp survivors' accounts and from prisoners' experiences that coping within such punitive and debilitating settings requires an active awareness of and exercise of care towards one's body. Protecting the body in this sense acts not only as a resistance to the system of confinement, but also as a pragmatic means of survival. As in the case of the prison (Bosworth 1999; Bosworth and Carrabine 2001; Bosworth 2004), acts of resistance in the camps did not necessarily entail brave and organised rebellions. The mere act of putting the body into "survival mode" was a source of courage and resistance. Shilling (2008:137) uses the example of washing as a form of coping and survival, illustrating that basic processes of 'taking care of the self' act as strategies of self-keeping in highly regulative settings. Similarly, the participants of this study discussed elaborately their care-taking regime while in prison and discussed particularly how their cleansing routines were intentionally used as coping strategies and attempts to maintain a sense of self that defied institutionalisation and prisonisation. As Olga explained, she developed a routine based around her bodily needs and her body's appearance:

I put myself into this timetable and I was very serious about it. I would wake up, make my bed, brush my teeth, go out and wash, then I would go back to my room wear clean clothes, brush my hair, put some lotion on, you know, *it had to be about me*, it was to sort of forget where you were at, pretending that it was only me in there ... and eventually, you start feeling better about yourself. (Olga)

Focusing on improving her well-being through a routine of bodily care allowed Olga to cope with her confinement and, momentarily at least, negate the painful meanings she attached to her imprisonment. This process of care-taking was functional for the participants because, as they explained, it not only helped to make daily life in prison tolerable, but it enhanced their self-esteem and allowed them to retain a sense of individuality and identity that was separate from their status as prisoners.



### *Fear of contamination*

The participants described perseverance in coping with the ‘pains of imprisonment’ through conscious efforts to take care of their bodies, particularly through washing and avoiding contamination and the spread of disease. This was borne out of a sense of fear and a need to protect their bodies from the polluting environment of the prison. Washing the body daily and investing in various cleansing products was described as a ‘sanity strategy’ (Susan) or a coping mechanism.

For the first few days when [I was] in prison ... I was shattered, but you also sort of go on survival mode. I tried to pull myself together, so I would shower, sometimes I had to force myself, but I would always go out and shower and my mum brought in clean clothes, so I tried to keep a decent appearance. While I was in there I tried to take care of myself as much as I could. Regardless of how I felt inside, I knew feeling clean and tidy would make things seem easier, that’s how I was brought up to think. (Regina)

Keeping the body clean (but also the prison space as shown by Sloan (2012) in regard to male prisoners) was described by some participants as the result of a *fear of contamination* and distrust of the hygiene of other inmates and the prison space in general. Cunha (2012) observed in the Portuguese prison context that prisoners often express a collective sense of empathy and attentiveness towards the health needs of other inmates, particularly older and ill prisoners (see also Wahidin and Tate 2005), and some participants in this study confirmed this.

However, some women also expressed a sense of separateness between the condition of their bodies and that of others, alluding to moral stigmas that they attached to other inmates. For example, Gemma and Iris repeatedly described themselves as different from ‘the typical prisoner’ and associated this stereotypical prisoner not only with backgrounds of poverty and addictions but also with unhealthy lifestyles that they attributed to a lack of hygiene and disease. These participants believed there is a clear link between contamination and the stigma of criminality and imprisonment. Through active strategies of bodily care these women attempted to differentiate themselves from other inmates in order to release themselves from the label of the “typical female offender”.

Most of them come in a really bad state. They probably never lived in a proper home before, they’d be dirty, had no teeth, some of them smelled. You know some look and act like animals! (Gemma)

I never felt comfortable knowing other prisoners made our food, washed the trays, and served it with their hands ... I always used my own of everything I could, I didn’t trust them. Same with clothes, I wanted my own brought from home. I’m not usually so particular, it’s just in there you see some really disgusting stuff, I would wash every day, but I couldn’t know what everybody else did. They came in there from the streets; I didn’t know what they brought in [with them]. (Iris)

Therefore, coping in the form of washing or ‘taking care’ of the body was a strategy employed as a response to the regime as well as a response to the presence of other inmates in a shared space. This type of focus on the body as a form of coping highlights, therefore, the highly isolating and lonesome experience of imprisonment which, among others, necessitated an active and conscious perception of the body/self in the environment of the prison.

The lack of individual control over hygiene-related aspects of daily life, along with the lack of privacy entailed in the prison experience, meant that some prisoners would re-constitute their identities not only in relation to other inmates, but more specifically, in *contrast* to them. This allowed them a moral superiority that was created on the corporeal level. As other participants explained, this process of differentiation and stigmatisation often caused feelings of isolation and it was described by as a form of bullying:

*Long hair*, yeah, I found that was a problem in there. I had really long hair when I went in. I wanted to cut it off because as soon as they saw you had long hair they would say ‘oh stay away from me, you should be covered in nits’ and I would wonder where they would get that from, I never understood how they got that impression, it was a lot like school, you know? I remember a couple of girls would tell me to put my hair up when we were in the queue to get food. So I did, eventually I went and cut my hair. (Yolanda)

Fear of contagion often went beyond the need to set bodily boundaries and materially separate from other inmates, as this was not always feasible. Such experiences highlight the process of ‘abjection’ (Kristeva 1982; Ahmed 2004; see also Chapter 3) that often constituted prisoner relations and developed subcategories of otherness among an already marginalised and deviant group of women.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has looked at participants’ responses in regard to specific strategies of coping and survival that are arguably embodied by being directed to either pleasing, comforting or protecting the body from the painful environment of the prison. These coping strategies of embodiment, the chapter has suggested, reveal their profound *affective* nature and can therefore elucidate our understanding of the emotional experience of imprisonment, the prison’s pain and the punishment-body relation (Howe 1994).

The emotional harms of the prison, the chapter suggests, can be investigated through the methodological and theoretical lens of embodiment: this is because emotions are socio-culturally and corporeally constituted and are expressed and managed in a bodily conscious manner (Williams and Bendelow 1998). By considering several manifestations of prison

emotions through a *relational perspective* (e.g. food and feeling or feeling and bodily injury) this chapter has shown how the effects of imprisonment on pained bodies are emotive. In this chapter, it is evident that the various emotions that affect prisoners' daily lives are felt through their subjective bodies, which echo the body's reflexive function, but are also tackled and dealt with by various management techniques of the body. The chapter concludes that although prisoner experiences cannot be generalised, the impact of imprisonment on the body tends to be traumatic and its effects persist long after imprisonment, making the prospect of reintegration and a fresh start meagre.

Aiming to offer an empirical contribution towards a more affective sociology of imprisonment, Chapters, 5, 6 and 7 highlighted the function of the body in understanding the experience of punishment through situationally-specific, experientially-grounded, and subjective accounts. The imprisoned body, as a changing and ambivalent body has been described as central in understanding prisoner and ex-prisoner identities and presentations, as well as vital in observing coping strategies in prison that can help better appreciate some indirect yet significant 'pains of imprisonment'.

## Conclusion

### Towards an affective sociology of embodied punishment

Every investigation that considers only the consciousness of men [*sic*],  
their 'reason' or 'ideas', while disregarding the structure of drives,  
the direction and form of human affects and passions,  
can from the outset be only of limited value. (Elias 1939: 486)

Vessel of life, the body is, as well, the ultimate vessel of meaning.  
And meaning, after all, is the beginning and the end of being human. (Vlahos 1979: 12)

This thesis set out to explore how women's experience of imprisonment could be understood through a sociological focus on the interaction between body and emotions. To achieve this, the thesis examined how an embodied experience perspective can explicate women's modern 'pains of imprisonment'. Through an empirical evaluation of the effects of imprisonment on women's bodies as expressed, repressed and felt through their embodied identities, I have argued that a sociology of emotions and embodiment can contribute towards a feminist critique of punishment (Howe 1994). Such a critique positions the *affective* function and experience of punishment within its social context, accounting, in particular, for the interaction between formal and informal networks of social control and differentiation. It engages with the 'dialectic of control' (Giddens 1984: 16) between life outside and inside prison, and between the prison and its prisoners (see also Crewe 2009). This thesis aimed to make a sociological contribution to the study of imprisonment and in so doing, it considered the social function and relevance of the imprisoned body in understanding elements of penal power, subjectivity and identity, inmate culture, the indirect and mundane pains of incarceration, and the resistance and adaptations that can be conveyed through women's bodies.

This final chapter draws together central themes that have emerged in the thesis, making suggestions for their theoretical relevance in expanding the study of women's imprisonment and the study of punishment and their methodological implications in doing research on imprisonment. Also, key themes are considered to provide a larger picture of the impact of incarceration on women's lives. In so doing, this conclusion makes some practical suggestions in regards to women's punishment. Moreover, the chapter considers the limitations of the thesis informing these with suggestions for future research. By providing an overview of the thesis as a whole, this chapter aims to contextualise its key findings within broader theoretical and practical debates in the field of prisons research.

## Overview of the thesis

I have argued in the first part of the thesis (Chapters 1-3) that existing research on the experience of imprisonment has attempted to articulate the harmful effects of the prison from a Cartesian perspective, distinguishing between mind and body, and has thus neglected women's embodied reactions to the prison and has overlooked the prison's technologies of discipline and punishment focused on prisoners' bodies. Having said this, I have shown that research within feminist criminology, appreciates that a study of the punishment-body relation could contribute towards a feminist critique of penalty (Howe 1994) that can challenge the more "masculinist" reviews of punishment. Such a critique, I have suggested, should not only examine how the prisoner's body-as-object is the target of modern punishment, but should also account for the knowledge that we can derive from the prisoner's body-as-subject in expressing and feeling the impact of punishment. Reviewing phenomenological and other accounts of embodiment and emotions, Chapter 2 argued that an embodied perspective on experience can allow researchers a clearer conceptualisation of what it might *feel* like to be a prisoner (see also Medlicott 2001; Jewkes 2005; Bosworth 1999). Chapter 3 continued this theoretical evaluation on embodiment by sketching feminist perspectives on female lived experience. In its attempt to offer a feminist critique of penalty, this thesis draws on these feminist accounts, found outside the margins of criminology, and connects analyses of women's oppression outside prison with the study of women's punishment.

The second part of the thesis (Chapters 4-7) focused on a review of the empirical findings that arose from a case study conducted predominantly with ex-prisoners and argued in Chapter 4 that a reflexive research method requires a phenomenological sensitivity to the body as a source of knowledge and meaning. The last three chapters of the thesis summarised key themes that arose from the empirical findings focused in illustrating the embodied experience of imprisonment through bodily changes in prison (Chapter 5), the presentation of self through the body in and after prison (Chapter 6) and the role of the body in expressing prison emotions, coping with imprisonment and feeling its effects (Chapter 7). These chapters demonstrated that a primary and direct effect of the prison, and thus a reflection of the body-punishment relation, is that the prisoner's body re-appears to the awareness of the prisoner, making both the experience of prison and the pains attached to it a significantly embodied experience. As part of this renewed bodily consciousness, the prisoner reconsiders her body as an essential element of her self-identity; this however, can often lead to a process of fracture between self and body and an overall ambivalence in self-

meanings. In such instances, the self seeks to assuage her felt pain by acting against her body or by engaging in strategies of “emotion work” which are directed onto her body and allow her to repress or bypass her pain in an embodied manner. I argued that it is because of this embodied existence that the prison becomes a place where self-inflicted harm and distractive coping strategies are fostered. However, I have also suggested that the experience of the prison is not necessarily, or at least, permanently embodied as a purely painful and negative experience. Some participants demonstrated that many bodily practices and coping strategies can be used in the long run as strategies for self-improvement and empowerment.

Moreover, the empirical findings suggest that the prison affects the prisoner’s body in ways that both reflect and transcend the prison, acting as an experience of *double oppression*. This is an experience that constitutes the self-identity of women prisoners based on the interaction of social controls and regulations within and outside the prison. The gendered elements of self-identity, along with other identity attributes such as ethnicity, class and age were considered throughout the thesis as features of both the material and the symbolic function of bodies. Indeed the thesis has shown that adopting an intersectional, non-essentialist perspective on prisoner identities requires an appreciation of how the *lived body* represents difference and subjectivity (Moi 1999) or how particular events and biographical moments can be captured through the embodiment of lived experience.

By looking at the overall structure of this thesis it becomes obvious that there are some common themes that inform all of the chapters in this study. These recurring themes are explored in the following section.

### **Key Themes**

#### ***1. Theoretical Reflections***

##### ***The concept of embodiment in understanding women’s experience of imprisonment***

The main argument of this thesis is that the experience of imprisonment is *embodied*. It is an experience constituted by the inscription of punishment *on* the prisoner’s body. Moreover, it is constituted by the capacity of the prisoner, as a lived body to perceive and understand the prison, and other life experiences, *through* her body. This further suggests that in being an experience of constant corporeal change, imprisonment and the ‘pains of imprisonment’ (Sykes 1958) inevitably entail a significant embodied dimension that has not been addressed in the literature. For example, the thesis demonstrates that

coping strategies are often based on, expressed through, and targeted at the prisoner's body. More than that, returning to the basic premise that the body-as-object is the target of punishment (Foucault 1979; Frigon 2007; McCorkel 2013), the thesis has shown that prison "pains" are "pains of the body". Arguably, the effects of imprisonment can be addressed through a phenomenological understanding of the "pained body" (Leder 1990; Williams and Bendelow 1998) as it is constructed in the dynamic interaction between a consumer, exclusionary society, a coercive and stigmatising penal system and a wilful, active prisoner-subject.

Adopting an embodied understanding of the experience of imprisonment provided the means with which to consider the identities of a group of women who expressed their punishment and correction in bodily-specific terms. In doing this, the participants of this study emphasised that everyday life in prison and the impact of prison experiences are perceived with reference and refuge to their bodies; they explained that they treat their bodies as resourceful sites that help them make sense of their lived world and selves. These women highlighted their embodied punishment with reference to their health, body-image, histories of addiction, sense of femininity and gendered identity, their presentation of self, their coping tactics and finally, their strategies of managing stigma inscribed on their bodies as a result of their imprisonment and troubled histories.

I used analyses of embodiment to first, justify the importance of bodies in the study of imprisonment and second, explain the connection between the study of lived experience and embodiment. Specifically, I showed that lived experience and its perception are inevitably embodied (Merleau-Ponty 1962). This means that the perception of space, time and relations within these takes place primarily on and through the individual's body. Moreover, I engaged theoretically with the concept of embodiment to understand the function and "position" of the female body in late modern, consumer society. In doing this, I utilised feminist theories on subjectivity and identity to emphasize the relevance of embodiment in understanding women's self-perceptions, body-image, internalised (male) gaze and self-regulating attitudes in regards to their gendered position in the world. To this end, I connected feminist work on gendered, embodied identity within an evaluation of women's self-identities and presentations in custody, highlighting the parallels between the oppression of women outside and inside prison, but also emphasising the paradoxes in prisoners' experiences and strategies of resistance that make their lived experiences unique and diverse. On the one hand, an embodied perspective underlines that imprisonment is felt by women as punishment, restricting severely their potential to be considered and consider

themselves adequate women. On the other, this perspective draws attention to women's agency, subjectivity and potential to resist. In other words, it allows a study of the prisoner as an active subject. Arguably, the embodiment paradigm goes beyond the concept of gender (Moi 1999), offering a more intersectional and situated path into the study of women's imprisonment. As Moi suggested, the category of gender is unhelpful in making a theory of subjectivity. She proposes that the concept of the 'lived body' is more appropriate as it can avoid biological essentialism while recognising the importance of materiality in the making of subjectivity. Similarly, a feminist perspective on imprisonment, and particularly one that aspires to study *lived experience* in prison, could employ the concept of the 'lived body' for a more diverse appreciation of subjectivity and identity in custody.

### *Change in bodies, ambivalence in self, uncertainty in pathways*

This thesis illustrated that the prison's aim to punish and discipline women, exposes women to a series of other harms that, although not intentional purposes of imprisonment, have serious implications on their lives. It could be concluded that the prison is inevitably entangled in a series of routines and control strategies that result in important embodied transformations on its inmates and these can be painful experiences with lasting effects and serious implications. In other words, studying what imprisonment *feels like* can contribute towards a better understanding of what imprisonment is *for*, putting into question pains that cannot be legitimised in line with the aims of imprisonment (see also Crewe 2009; Carrabine 2000; 2004).

The primary observation the thesis makes is that women's imprisonment entails, first and foremost, an awareness of their *bodies changing in prison*. This, in turn, results in an *ambivalent* sense of self (Bauman 1991) which to an extent reflects outside consumerist body projects (Shilling 2003), but goes beyond these, exacerbating women's sense of uncertainty and distrust in themselves by severely compromising their ability to control and manage their time and bodies. Moreover, drawing on the parallel techniques of such discipline in and out of prison – for example, as seen through regimes of exercise and diet, the commodification and consumerism of female appearance and the symbolic function of fashion and clothing in everyday life – the thesis has addressed the structural dimensions that make this experience one of discipline/punishment but also one of gendered performance.



### ***The concept of double oppression in evaluating women's identities and the effects of incarceration***

I have argued that this process of bodily change in prison is an unintended consequence of imprisonment: the prison demonstrates to its inmates what types of women and bodies they are socially expected to be, advocating idealised attitudes towards maintaining inter-personal relations and towards sustaining routines of body-care and health. Simultaneously, this notion of bodily awareness makes the prisoners conscious of the profound differences that exist between them and the “normal” woman they (ought to) aspire to be, setting them apart and “othering” them even further. Indeed, the participants repeatedly compared themselves to an abstract “average woman” and some tried to present themselves in contrast to ‘typical women prisoners’ trying to manage and position their identity somewhere in-between deviant women and ‘normal’ women. This is described in the thesis as an experience of *double oppression* because imprisonment entails changing women’s embodied sense of womanhood and self to introduce an appreciation of “womanhood” in its accepted and normalized form (Carlen 1998) whilst at the same time, it entails dealing with the denial of that very womanhood they are expected to perform. In a sense, punishment for women is a process whereby they are made aware only of that which they cannot be – it is a painful lesson into the extent of their otherness and exclusion.

### ***Before, during and after prison: The dimensions of time and space in understanding the lived experience of imprisonment***

To understand the embodied dimension of these lived changes, avoiding a focus only on their socio-cultural construction, the thesis considered the concepts of *time and space* as constituents of embodied experience and perception inside and outside prison (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Heidegger 1962; Leder 2004). An important theme that the embodiment paradigm draws is that self-perception is fluid and relies on the temporal dimension of a prison sentence. For example, changes to women’s physical appearance, such as increase in weight, are often initially welcome, representing a regained appetite following a detoxification from addictions. This approach toward the growing body however, changes for women when they begin to prepare for their release from prison. During this time, extra weight or scars from self-injury and other physical evidence of imprisonment are considered additional limits to women’s opportunities to be accepted as “normal” women in society. Similarly, this time dimension highlighted that the experience of the prison is better understood as a set of *changing moments*, in which women’s capacity to perform their identity and resist regulation varies. For example, *visiting hours* are central moments in women’s prison experiences in which they consciously engage in a process of

self-presentation that connects them with the outside world and conceals their emotional turmoil.

Moreover, it was observed that “doing time” is a bodily-conscious experience of transformation and lack of control. This is because of the regulated timetables and the temporal fracture a prison sentence imposes into the life narratives of women. Furthermore, women perceive the temporal impact of their imprisonment directly on their bodies: by observed physical change and through stressful experiences of ageing in prison. The thesis suggests that as an active subject, the prisoner reacts to her modification and contributes to it.

Similarly, it was observed that adjusting to the prison space requires women to make sense of their surroundings in a bodily manner. This adjustment process can entail a sensorial evaluation of prison space, movements, sounds and odours, whereby the women actively protect themselves from their environment and get attuned to life in prison through a material evaluation of their lived experiences as these *compare and contrast* to their lived experiences outside prison.

By focusing on the temporally-determined dimension of embodiment, the empirical case study presented in this thesis placed the experience of imprisonment within the broader life narratives of the participants. A main contribution that this empirical component makes is that it explicates the extent and nature of harm carried by women prisoners’ biographies and is inscribed on their bodies and notions of self-identity. An overall conclusion that can be drawn from the findings is that while not all women found the prison space a painful environment, all of them talked about instances in which imprisonment felt punitive and emotionally painful. Their bodies, in other words, revealed signs of punishment experienced from a combination of their painful backgrounds and the regulation and stigmatisation that they experienced during and after their imprisonment. This phenomenological account provided a clearer presentation of the impact of imprisonment on women’s lives and importantly, it allowed for their punishment to be evaluated in *relation* to the deprivations they experienced before and after their imprisonment. Going beyond the importation-deprivation debate (Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2005), I have suggested that the lived experience of custody should be approached by researchers within a psychosocial framework (see Section 3). The thesis has argued that the experience of imprisonment is not constituted merely by the time spent inside prison, and that an understanding of individual

experiences of punishment should start with an awareness of the harms and traumas experienced before, but also after the sentence has been served.

## ***2. Practical Reflections: Challenging the concept and purpose of punishment***

The idea of punishment relies on the infliction of pain as a retributive response to an offence without efforts being made to reconcile the events of the offence and explain to the offender the harm that her offence has caused. Therefore, even though punishment feeds some of our emotional fears and anger, and socially excludes a portion of our societies, it has proven time and again that it does not necessarily act as a deterrent, setting its very purpose into question (Mathiesen 2000; Garland 2001).

While the deprivation of liberty is meant to be the main punitive objective of the prison, women in this study talked about other, more minor yet significant, occurrences of punishment which they experienced while in prison. These related to, yet were separate from, the deprivation of liberty in prison and had a lasting impact on the women's self-identities. Thus, a further conclusion that can be drawn is that while incarceration may be a proportionate response to the offending of a minority of female offenders, its extension to all women prisoners unnecessarily perpetuates instances of punishment and self-degradation. As also evidenced in recent attitudes towards community penalties, a punitive element is considered essential by policy-makers for the successful reduction in women's offending cycles (Ministry of Justice 2013e). However, the findings of this study suggest that non-punitive, rehabilitation-focused sentences would better serve the communitarian objective to reduce crime.

While this conclusion supports the government's recent plan to reform and extend rehabilitation and resettlement services (Ministry of Justice 2013e), it does not support the continued merging of punitive and rehabilitative objectives. For example, the most recent government report on *Strategic Objectives for Female Offenders* (Ministry of Justice 2013e) encourages an increase in the use of community sentences for women and suggests that these should combine a punitive and rehabilitative agenda which is unlikely to address women's needs and provide adequate support to reduce women's reoffending. The participants of this study revealed that their feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, and pessimism were not generated solely from the prison environment, but rather, they were an endemic outcome of the *symbolic function* of the prison in representing punishment. Indeed, the participants could easily distinguish between the positive features of the prison and its

punitive features by explaining that the accommodation and rehabilitative options that the prison offered were valuable to them and could allow a possibility of a fresh start. However, as shown in other studies of women's imprisonment and throughout this thesis, the combination of care and punishment is likely to prioritise punitive and security objectives, undermining the significance and impact that care and rehabilitation services can offer women.

One of the lasting effects of imprisonment made clear by an evaluation of the punishment-body relation is that imprisonment (further) reinforces women's negative self-perceptions in ways that often obstruct them from pursuing non-criminal lifestyles and push them deeper into self-blaming and unconstructive choices. As some participants expressed, the painful and stigmatising experience of imprisonment along with the lack of support for their resettlement needs, contribute to the perpetuation of drug-use and criminal lifestyles. These women's relationship with their bodies shows that they have endured self- and other-inflicted instances of harm which are aggravated by punitive criminal justice responses. The study's critique therefore is targeted at the growing focus on punishment observed in custodial and other sentencing options and its findings challenge the dominance of a retributive and exclusionary focus in the response to women's offending.

As an alternative response to the growing criminalisation and imprisonment of women, Gelsthorpe et al. (2007) argue that good practice in regard to provision for women in the community should entail a women-only approach. Such a program could facilitate women's integration with non-criminal groups and help to direct their experiences to non-criminal lifestyles. Moreover, Gelsthorpe et al. (2007) suggest that a women-centred, community-based approach should offer opportunities for women's empowerment through encouragement to seek employment and improve aspects of their self-esteem. It should offer women a system that takes into account their learning styles and can address their offending in a holistic and practically efficient manner. To achieve a more holistic approach and to increase the potential of a smooth reintegration, the report also advises that women are offered a supportive network of people from whom they could seek advice even after the end of their community programme, thus placing the focus of the sentencing of women on the provision of support rather than punishment (Gelsthorpe et al. 2007: 3-4).

A consistent and thorough revaluation of welfare objectives is therefore necessary in order to challenge the neo-liberal focus on women's risks/needs. Materially aware, yet non-essentialist structures of rehabilitation could divert treatment from its pathologising

tendencies and simultaneously offer the necessary support to sustain women's resettlement and wellbeing needs. This thesis has suggested that recent attempts to reform women's treatment within the criminal justice system through a more "holistic" agenda (Corston 2007) require a subjective engagement with the life narratives of individual women while also providing relevant programmes and support that account for the ambivalent and harmed nature of women's health status and embodied identities in a non-essentialising manner. Such programmes could include a more body-centred approach that allows women, above all, to take the opportunity to express in non-harmful ways their inscribed traumas and anxieties.

### ***3. Methodological Reflections: The concepts of affect, emotions and subjectivity in doing prisons research***

The thesis used its theoretical perspective as a way to conduct research on imprisonment differently. It showed that emotions are embodied notions – and this is particularly important in the prison context where the body is one of the few "resources" that the prisoner can employ to cope with her emotional turmoil. Moreover, it suggested that the experience of conducting research with female ex-prisoners and arguably other types of prison-related samples require a reflexive interpretation and inter-corporeal consciousness that can derive its interpretation from a bodily aware perspective; this could allow the potential to appreciate what it might *feel* like to have been a prisoner. In its aim to deeply engage with women's *subjective* accounts of life in prison, the thesis provided a methodological perspective that suggests the relevance of searching for and deconstructing the *particular* perceptions women have of their experiences. As Crewe explains:

It is because prisoners confront the penal regime with such a range of backgrounds, expectations, and sentence conditions that they experience and adjust to different pains and deprivations, contest different aspects of the regime, discard and maintain their identities to different extents, and develop different kinds of social relationships. (Crewe 2009: 8)

By offering a phenomenology of embodied punishment, the thesis advises that the only way outsiders and researchers can appreciate the diverse impact of imprisonment is by acknowledging the embodied, and thus, uniquely *particular* dimension of lived experience in constituting the meaning and impact of punishment on the lives of individual women. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to focus on personal experiences as these arise in a case study through a life narrative perspective (Maruna and Matravers 2007).

Moreover, this study suggests that critical perspectives on punishment should strive to be *affective*. What this means is that a study of the effects of imprisonment should

challenge the rationales and structures that sustain punishment as necessary and appropriate for women and it should do so in an emotionally-conscious and reflexive manner. It was argued that one such way of doing affective prisons research is by presenting the embodied dimensions of self-identity and by implication, exposing the embodied emotions that are drawn from experiences of punishment, exclusion and stigmatisation. Also, affective prisons research can provide a more holistic understanding of lived experiences of imprisonment, highlighting the ‘missing’ harms and unintended consequences of punishment. I have suggested throughout the thesis that a more emotionally aware sociology of imprisonment should engage widely with an intra-disciplinary perspective in understanding punishment. A sociology of emotions, a psychoanalysis of self-perception, a psychodynamic theory of punitiveness and a cultural anthropology of intersectional forms of oppression in our societies, can facilitate a necessary diversity of perspectives for a more nuanced study of how punishment and its particular manifestations fit within our wider socio-cultural sentiments and late-modern uncertainties.

More than a decade ago, Kathleen Woodward (1996: 758) observed an ‘explosion of academic fascination with the emotions’ which, she suggested could be explained as a response to and compensation for ‘the anaesthetisation of emotions in everyday life’ (1996: 760). Indeed, our late-modern context has been described as overtly rationalised and ‘pain killing’ (Rose 2001). But despite persistent pressures, the social sciences, and particularly the discipline of sociology, have seen a resurgence of the senses, an interest in the interaction of minds, bodies and societies and, more recently, we have seen the birth of a sociology of emotions that is being applied in many fields of investigation (*inter alia* Burkitt 1997; Shilling 2002; 2005a; Williams 1998; Sarbin 2001; Boden and Williams 2002; Hemmings 2005). Although these affective influences are also now observable in some criminological research employing psychosocial approaches (e.g. Gadd and Jefferson 2007; Crewe and Bennett 2012; Bosworth et. al 2005; Maruna and Matravers 2007; Gelsthorpe 2007; de Haan and Loader 2002; Katz 2002; Loader 2005; Gadd and Jefferson 2007; Ferrell et. al 2004), the discipline could, in its overall history, be accused of a myopic attitude towards theoretically informed and subjectivist accounts of social life (Maruna and Matravers 2007). The history of the sociology of punishment in particular, has been described as having an absence of ‘cultural and expressive characteristics’ (Garland 2006)<sup>62</sup>. Arguably, the study of crime control is inevitably entangled with other processes of social control and the study of punitive institutions can no longer be explored in isolation from

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<sup>62</sup> Having said this, it should be noted that today, the study of punishment is more multi-dimensional, engaging with theories and methodologies from anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis and media and cultural studies.

other regulating networks. Indeed, one of the many contributions of a feminist criminology has been to explicate the interaction between social control and practices of punishment (e.g. Heidensohn 1996; Carlen 1998; Howe 1994). This thesis is largely a product of such affective sociological accounts, shaped by a motivation to understand social control and punishment by utilising a unique theoretical lens that pays attention to both the manifest and latent meanings derived from its subject-matter. It focuses on the form and perspective of the stories told by participants and it aims to provide ‘personal outlooks and theories of reality, not reality itself’ (Maruna and Matravers 2007: 431).

Steps toward a more emotive attitude within criminology have recently produced more theoretically and methodologically diverse and complex accounts of social structures and behaviour (e.g. Katz 1988; 2002; Valier 2000; Phillips and Earle 2010). As David Smith suggested:

One of the most striking developments in recent criminology is the revival of attention to the individual biographies of people who offend, to their inner, sometimes unconscious experiences, and to the importance of emotion as a source of action. (Smith 2006: 361)

This thesis hopes to contribute towards this less dogmatic and positivist criminology in researching its highly unsupported subject-matter.

### **Limitations and future directions**

Although this thesis contributes knowledge on the effects of punishment and on the identities of the women that it targets, it does not make specific, policy-orientated evaluations. Moreover, even though the political agenda of the thesis is critical and decarcerative, its findings cannot provide suggestions as to how such reforms can be made, nor can it deliver an empirical assessment of alternatives to imprisonment. Instead, this research started with an implicit assumption and framework, that punishment harms women’s life narratives; the aim was to explore *how* this takes place in ways that we have not yet acknowledged.

Further, even though the thesis acts as a critique of punishment, it does acknowledge the paradoxically positive effects of the prison on certain women whose backgrounds do not constitute the experience of imprisonment as particularly limiting or punitive. Therefore, even though the focus of critique in this study was imprisonment, it is acknowledged that there are also effects caused by these women’s socio-economic deprivation, addictions and socially marginalised lifestyles which contribute to their painful self-identities, and these are also worthy of consideration.

In addition to the originality of its theoretical contribution, the empirical component of the thesis also provides an original insight, but it is obviously limited in terms of generalisability and “objectivity”. The sample of participants in this study is small, but the theoretical and methodological pledge of this study to phenomenological and feminist research allows this small sample to tell a meaningful story. This story would have been a different, and possibly a more coherent story if it was conducted within a prison, employing an inter-corporeal observation of the passing of time and living of prison space from an ethnographic perspective. Such an account would not rely on the limitations of a posted questionnaire or on the limits of memory-based interviews on the prison experience. On the other hand, if my original intention to pursue ethnographic prisons research had been fulfilled, I would not have had the opportunity to look at the impact of imprisonment *after* prison, the embodiment of prison trauma and stigmatisation after release. Although post-release experiences were never a central focus of the thesis, I recognise their significance in understanding the overall impact of imprisonment. Thus, to some extent, the methods and sample to which I had to adjust this study have allowed me to observe the parallels between lives in and outside prison and positioned the subject of this thesis within its wider social context.

Research and the making of knowledge is an on-going craft, an exercise which needs adjustment, compromise and self-reflection. It is therefore clear that the theoretical perspective that this study puts forward is only a first step towards a more affective and embodying sociology of punishment. It is by no means a final result. To this end, I acknowledge this is a limited review of the experience of imprisonment which can only serve as a contribution *in combination and in addition to other*, existing perspectives and findings. The “reality” of life in prison is inevitably diverse and difficult to deconstruct; what I tried to show in this thesis, is that it requires a pledge towards a plural, multi-dimensional and subjective account of imprisonment. As Bosworth et al. (2005) advised prison researchers should aim to offer a *humane* account of imprisonment. A first step in that direction can be observed in recent attempts to develop a “convict-criminology” in the United States (Richards and Ross 2001) which invites prisoners and ex-prisoners to write about their lived experiences. This first-hand perspective could potentially challenge the rationale behind increased punitiveness and mass incarceration. A criminology written from the perspective of prisoners however is not enough. Scholarly research too needs to engage with and give voice to prisoners and, in doing this, it should represent different prisoners’ perspectives and highlight the complexity, diversity and inconsistency of the prison experience. As Bosworth et. al explain:



It is important to remember that there are many different possible versions of the prison experience, none of which alone will provide the absolute “truth” about imprisonment. Often, accounts of prison, whether from a prisoner, a professor, or a prison official, will conflict with one another[...] As feminists have noted, women’s experiences in prison differ from men’s...The vibrant field of women’s prison studies usually exists quite separately from the more acclaimed arena of books on men. Few male authors cite equivalent literature on women, rendering it ghettoized within the discipline...If researchers can coordinate with prisoners to take into account a number of viewpoints, it may be possible to build a stronger and more convincing critique of the current system. (Bosworth et al. 2005: 261)

As Foucault (1977:209) has also implicitly suggested, it is necessary to do critical prisons research *with* prisoners and not merely write *about* them. With all its limitations and flaws, I trust that this study has collaborated with its participants to present a more human(e) story of imprisonment. It has suggested that by listening to prisoners and ex prisoners’ stories and by giving voice to them, researchers may be able to ‘draw attention to their basic humanity’ (Bosworth et al. 2005:161-2); which arguably, is often overlooked in political and public debates on punishment.

Having said this, the findings of this thesis need further exploration and expansion. Future research in this area should focus on the interaction and co-constitution of minds and bodies and should attempt a more diverse approach towards the study of experience and identity that does not neglect its bodily dimensions. The inscription and mortification of the body in prison is an area of research that needs more exploration, particularly in regard to coping and resistance strategies that different types of prisoners employ. As the thesis briefly touched upon, through differences in the embodied approaches of women from different racial and age groups, it is obvious that an interaction of factors constitute lived experience. It would therefore be interesting and necessary to expand this field of research to the experience of men’s imprisonment, retaining a gender-aware and feminist perspective. Moreover, the role and function of the body after release from imprisonment is another area that needs further investigation. Moran (2012; 2013a) has made some relevant observations in regard to embodied stigma after release from prison. Such evaluations could expand into processes of reintegration, considering the function of the body not only in concealing its stigmatising elements, but also in adjusting to and continuing to exist in a state of change and ambivalence.

Future research should also investigate further the role and impact of physical exercise on male and female prisoners. A study on movement and bodily fitness will not only have implications for a better understanding of the health status of prisoners, but this could also expand our knowledge of self-presentation strategies and interactions within

prisoner culture. Although there are already some thorough examinations of health-care provision inside women's prisons (e.g. Plugge et al. 2006; Smith 2002), these do not take on an embodied identity perspective to consider the meanings and symbols attached to practices of health. By extension, there is still much to learn about the relationship between experiences of 'doing health', retaining self-control and experiencing punishment.

Studying the prison as the product of a wider society (Sykes 1958) also means that we need to account more for the differences that cultures and socio-economic conditions bring into the prison space. Thus, a comparative and international perspective is likely to uncover a necessary diversity to our knowledge of the prison experience. The experience of imprisonment in third world prisons, Southern European prisons under the current economic recession and Anglo-American prisons, involve very different institutional settings, different conditions and, by extension, they constitute unique prisoner experiences which are all equally relevant in understanding the pervasiveness and application of modern penal practices. It is also important to study the experience of the prison as constituted by its late-modern, consumerist and punitive context. Prisoners today face new difficulties, both during and after their imprisonment, and there are new groups of prisoners whose experiences would make an important contribution to our knowledge of how imprisonment challenges ideas of citizenship. For example, a study of embodied punishment could prove illuminating in understanding and empathising with the experiences of foreign national prisoners.

This perspective could also have been investigated with an entirely different sample. For example, the embodied experience of imprisonment could have employed a comparative approach, evaluating the lived experiences of young and older prisoners. Moreover, a more evaluative review of imprisonment could have included an assessment of the differences in experiences of embodiment in open and closed prisons. It is important that future research in this field engages theoretically and empirically with the expression and management of the emotions that make up prison life; such research should sociologically, psychologically and psychoanalytically define the "narrative plots" of prison life (Sarbin 2001).

It is also acknowledged that the implications of a theoretical focus on embodiment can expand the field of research into other areas of punishment, beyond the prison. Other lived experiences of social life entail a painful and regulative nature; for example, hospital settings and patient-doctor encounters could be further understood through an evaluation of the emotions and embodiment of such expert-dominated spaces. Finally, incapacitation and targeted exclusion are practices which often change their direction and focus, based on

changing social and political sentiments. The expansion therefore of penal power into relatively new institutions such as immigration removal and detention centres warrants further evaluation. The embodiment paradigm could allow a comparative evaluation between prisons and holding centres considering the painful and punitive elements of the latter and paying attention to the cultural and intersectional oppressions that detention centres represent.

### **Concluding remarks**

Feminist theory and phenomenological theories of embodiment have long proliferated empirical and theoretical understandings of identity, lived experience and pain outside the prison, and have brought the body to the centre of sociological imagination and investigation. This thesis suggests that through this more thoroughly theoretical understanding of the complex interaction between self, body and society, we can reconceptualise the ‘pains of imprisonment’ and more clearly understand the complex relation between subjectivity and penal power. Arguably, such a perspective is timely in applying elements of our consumer, ‘somatic society’ (Turner 1992: 12-13) to the experience of imprisonment. The thesis presents a critique of modern punishment which reflects both the coercive penal and social controls that constitute women’s lived experiences. As a theoretically-informed empirical study, this thesis hoped to provide an intra-disciplinary dialogue which offers an original critique of penality.

### Appendix 1: Design, collection and analysis timetable

Time	
October 2009- October 2010	Literature review, research questions and design of initial plan to conduct prison ethnography; WIP in prison workshop collaboration
October - December 2010	Interview Questions; Demographic questions; Ethics Application for 'High Risk' study application, consent forms and information sheet.
January 2011	Ethics form amendments
February 2011	NOMS Ministry of Justice Prison Research application; Letters to prison governors
March 2011	Ethical approval granted until March 2013 Ref: SSSL/10/11-15, Social Sciences High Risk Ethics Committee, KCL WIP-workshop prison access denied
June-July 2011	Unsuccessful NOMS application; Failed attempts to gain access via other contacts; Women In Prison workshop and posted questionnaires
July-August 2011	Transcription of long-answer questionnaires (approx. 28 hours of transcription); Redesigning the interviews to focus on ex-prisoners; Establishing initial contact with NGO and charities working with ex-prisoners; Negotiating access and potential participants; advertising the study with a poster
August- September 2011	Initial contact with interested participants, arrangement of interview meetings and locations; Data Collection <i>Locations and length of visits:</i>
26-30 August	1. London and West Sussex: 5 interviews
September 5-10	2. Sheffield-Doncaster-Wakefield: 15 interviews
September 24	3. Worcester: 2 interviews
September 29	Worcester: 2 interviews
30 September- 30 October 2011 (20 days)	Transcription of interviews: Approximately 5 hours per 1 hour of audio interview Total Audio hours: 42 Total transcription time: approximately. 210 hrs Approximately 11 hrs/day over a period of 3 weeks.
November 2011	Nvivo first stage of coding and contact with participants to arrange second meeting Report of field notes and review of emerging themes from observations
November 23- December 17 2011	Follow-up interviews with 13 participants and revision of transcripts Five days of data collection: 3 interviews in Crawley; 2 in London; 4 in Sheffield; 3 in Doncaster; 1 in Worcester. Total Audio hours: 20 Total Transcription: approx. 40 hrs / approx 5 days.
December 2011- March 2012	Data analysis: report of findings including themes, subthemes, relationships and initial conclusions from the interviews, field notes, questionnaires and literature.

## Appendix 2: Ethics Approval for 'High Risk' Research



Anastasia Chamberlen  
School of Law  
King's College London  
Strand Campus  
WC2R 2LP  
01 March 2011

Dear Anastasia

### **SSHL/10/11-15 An investigation into the bodily identities of incarcerated women.**

Thank you for sending in the amendments requested to the above project. I am pleased to inform you that these meet the requirements of the SSHL RESC and therefore that full approval is now granted. Please ensure that you follow all relevant guidance as laid out in the King's College London Guidelines on Good Practice in Academic Research (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/index.php?id=247>).

For your information ethical approval is granted until **01 March 2013**. If you need approval beyond this point you will need to apply for an extension to approval at least two weeks prior to this explaining why the extension is needed, (please note however that a full re-application will not be necessary unless the protocol has changed). You should also note that if your approval is for one year, you will not be sent a reminder when it is due to lapse.

If you do not start the project within three months of this letter please contact the Research Ethics Office. Should you need to modify the project or request an extension to approval you will need approval for this and should follow the guidance relating to modifying approved applications: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ethics/applicants/modifications.html>

Any unforeseen ethical problems arising during the course of the project should be reported to the approving committee/panel. In the event of an untoward event or an adverse reaction a full report must be made to the Chairman of the approving committee/review panel within one week of the incident.

Please would you also note that we may, for the purposes of audit, contact you from time to time to ascertain the status of your research.

If you have any query about any aspect of this ethical approval, please contact your panel/committee administrator in the first instance (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ethics/contacts.html>). We wish you every success with this work.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Jim Summers  
Senior Research Ethics Officer

c.c. Professor Elaine Player

### **Appendix 3: Interview and Questionnaire Questions**

#### **A. Semi-structured Interview Questions**

##### **Demographic Questions:**

1. Age; Ethnic background; Sexual Orientation; Educational/Skill level; Marital status; Occupation
2. Mother/not; Single parent; victim of past abuse; substance misuse and treatment; self-harm; suicide attempt; dietary/nutritional/other health problems.
3. Sentence type; Length of sentence; Number of sentences served; Type of prison and facilities used

##### **General Questions: The overall experience of the prison**

1. How would you describe your prison experience? How did you feel and how do you feel now about the prison's regime? The culture and relations with other inmates? About everyday life in prison?
2. When you first went into prison, what were your first impressions? How did you feel and how did you manage to adapt?
3. What is the prison space like? How does time pass in prison?
4. Do you remember how you felt about sounds, smells and/ or movement in the physical space of the prison?
5. What was life like inside prison? Do you remember any particular moments which marked your experience?
6. What felt like 'punishment' in prison?
7. Would say imprisonment was a painful experience? If so, can you give some examples?
8. Has, (and if so, how) imprisonment affected you (your personality, attitudes, life and relations)?
9. Would you say that you use your body to express yourself, your feelings and your identity? If so, how do you use your body to express yourself (e.g. body art, make up, clothes, hairstyles, body-size, colours used, jewellery etc)?
10. Did you use your body similarly to express yourself inside prison? Was your bodily expression limited in prison?
11. How was your life in prison different from your life outside?
12. How would you say your body dealt with and experienced imprisonment?

##### **Theme 1: Gender and self-presentation**

1. What was your routine like in prison?
2. Would you say the prison (guards, medical staff, educational/training staff etc) made an effort to help you be more feminine? Did prison provide for your needs as a woman? Do you feel more feminine now or when you were back in prison?
3. Since you left prison, have you noticed any physical changes on your appearance?
4. Did you present yourself differently inside prison?
5. Was it important to maintain a certain appearance in prison?
6. What were some central moments in your prison experience in which your appearance was particularly important?
7. Did you feel you had enough privacy in prison?

##### **Theme 2: Health and prison food**

8. How did you treat your body in prison? Did the prison regime have an impact on how you treated your body?
9. Has your physical appearance or health changed/ improved/ deteriorated in prison?
10. How did you experience menstruation or other biological changes in prison?
11. Do you care about your health? Do you take care of your body in any particular ways?
12. Do you feel healthy right now? Did you feel healthy in prison? What is 'health' according to you? What does it take to be healthy in prison?
13. Did you use particular products or treatments in prison?

14. How did food, meal times and eating feature into your overall prison experience? Was food important to you in prison?

**Theme 3: Self, Emotions and punishment**

15. How did you cope with your negative feelings in prison?  
16. How, if at all, did you resist imprisonment? How did you retain control inside prison?  
17. How did you express your feelings in prison?  
18. Did prison harm you? Was your experience emotionally or physically painful?  
19. Do you have a different/changed/ positive/negative body-image/ self-esteem? How has the prison affected this?

**Conclusion: Positive**

20. What do you like about yourself? What do you consider your good features? What are your best qualities?  
21. What would make a big difference to how you feel about yourself?  
22. If you would like this research to have an impact on one thing, what would it be? What is one thing you appreciate about your life right now? What are your plans for the future?

**B. Questionnaire**

**Demographic Questions**

1. Age; Ethnic background; Sexual Orientation; Educational/Skill level; Marital status; Occupation
2. Mother/not; Single parent; victim of past abuse; substance misuse and treatment; self-harm; suicide attempt; dietary/nutritional/other health problems.
3. Sentence type; Length of sentence and time served; Number of sentences served; Type of prison and facilities used (e.g. gym, hair salon etc).

**Health and prison nutrition**

1. Please define health. Since you have been in prison has your health, improved/ worsened or remained as it was before imprisonment? Has your physical appearance of health changed in prison? How have you experienced unique biological events such as menstruation or biological change due to ageing in prison? What does being healthy in prison entail? Can you think of something you can do to feel healthy in prison?
2. What services and treatment did the prison offer you? Did you take advantage of the prison facilities, including the gym, the hair salon, and the canteen?
3. How did such services and various products you used make you feel about yourself? Give examples.
4. Do you follow any specific diet in prison? Explain.
5. Has your relationship with food changed since you've entered prison? If so, how?
6. Are you comfortable with your body size?
7. Do you use any substances to block out how you feel about yourself?
8. If you have ever practiced self harm, can you write a bit about the reasons that prompted you to do this?

**Body-image, self-esteem and feeling punishment**

1. What does prison feel like? You can use examples of how physical space is felt, how prison smells or sounds, or how you pass time in prison.
2. Do you think prison has made an impact on the way you think about yourself?  
Yes/No  
If yes, in what ways did the prison have such an impact? Please provide an example.
3. Would you say that you use your body to express yourself, feelings and identity?  
Yes/No. If yes, how do you use your body to express yourself?
4. How, if at all, has prison impacted on the ways you express yourself through your body?

5. In terms of your physical appearance is your body different or changed in prison than it was before you came into prison? Can you provide with some examples?
6. If you noticed physical changes in prison, are these changes positive or negative? Please explain with some examples.
7. Would you say that prison takes care of you as a woman? If so, how? If not, how could it improve?
8. Do you think prison makes you feel more feminine, masculine or gender-free?
9. Does the prison environment make you feel physically negative about yourself? If so, in what ways, if possible, please give 1 or 2 examples.
10. How if at all, are the prison's psychological effects reflected on your physical health, body-image, and/or appearance?
11. Do you take care of yourself and body in particular ways? What routines do you have in prison?
12. Can you explain what you think/feel when you see the words 'self-control' 'resistance' and 'punishment'? How do you express self-control and resistance in prison? Examples.
13. How do you use your body to cope with punishment and life in prison?
14. Can you think of 2-3 specific ways in which you feel punished? Does prison punish your body as well? If so, how?

Optional: Provide with a self-portrait. Draw yourself as you think your body and features appear.

You can submit any other related art, poetry etc with this questionnaire.

**Conclusion: positive**

9. What are the positive aspects of the prison? How has it helped you and your body improve?
10. What have you learnt, if anything?
11. What do you like about yourself? What do you consider your good features? What are your best qualities?
12. What would make a big different to how you feel about yourself?
13. If you would like this research to have an impact on one thing, what would it be?



#### **Appendix 4: Biographical Summaries of the Interview Participants**<sup>63</sup>

**Anna:** I met Anna in Crawley, Sussex at a house she was sharing with her partner and interview participant Berta (see below). Anna is 23 and has served two prison sentences in prisons near London. She had a long history of heroin and crack cocaine abuse which started at the time she was sexually and physically abused by her father in her early teens. Her father introduced and encouraged her drug use as a way to ‘silence and control’ (Anna) her. She explained that her father is now serving a long prison sentence for child abuse offences against her and her sister. Anna served her last prison sentence for robbery the victim of which was a young woman. Experiencing withdrawal symptoms she attacked the stranger to acquire money for heroin. She served her first prison sentence for theft for 5 months and during her last custodial sentence she stayed in prison for 9 months. When I met her she had been out of prison for two weeks. I connected well with Anna who mainly discussed her experience of imprisonment in relation to the process of drug detoxification and the revival of her senses and appetites as well as the pressure and limits prison inflicted on her. She also discussed aspects of sexuality and inmate relations as these affect the presentation of self in prison and made interesting connections between life in and outside of prison. She emphasised at both the initial as well as the follow up interview, how the embodied pains of imprisonment persisted after release and highlighted the traumatic experiences of many women prior to their imprisonment.

**Berta:** I met Berta in Crawley, Sussex. She participated at both the initial and the follow up interview together with Anna. As these were group interviews I derived rich data which was mostly focused on the two women’s common experiences of life both in and out of prison, and their shared understanding of incarceration and the pains of imprisonment. Having said this, Berta sought to differentiate some of her personal experiences from Anna, highlighting in particular their age difference (Berta is 35 years old), her longer criminal career and incarceration experiences (she served 8 prison sentences), and differences in their sexuality and gendered experiences (Berta identified as a bisexual woman and Anna as a lesbian). Berta explained that she came from a highly deprived background and often lived in the streets as a child and teenager. She never met her parents, who she understood were serving prison sentences, and who were now dead. She developed a heroin habit by the age of 14 and engaged in prostitution for several years; this led to her receiving several short custodial sentences for shop-lifting, theft and drug trafficking. She served her last, and longest, custodial sentence for an attempt to sell drugs to an undercover police officer and she was convicted for 2 years. When I met her, she had been out of prison for 2 weeks; during the interviews Berta gave a robust critique of the prison system and in particular the medical services available to prisoners. She also explained the embodied pains of her imprisonment in connection with the various deprivations, abuse and illnesses she endured prior to her imprisonment, highlighting some of the prison’s unintended harms on women’s identities.

**Carmen:** I met Carmen in Greater London. She is 19 years old – one of the youngest research participants I interviewed. She deeply engaged with the topic of this project, finding aspects of body-image and the presentation of self in prison central to her own sense of the pains of imprisonment. Though she spent relatively little time in prison (4 weeks) during her last sentence, she provided a detailed account of the experience of entering the austere

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<sup>63</sup> The names used here are pseudonyms and an effort is made to retain the anonymity of the participants.

environment of the prison, focusing in particular on the traumatic effect the first few days in prison had on her overall sense of self and self-esteem. She served another custodial sentence in the past, staying in prison for 4 months. Identifying as an Asian British woman, she also talked about diversity in prison and expressed feeling particularly excluded from the prison's inmate cultures and routines. Especially in the follow up interview, Carmen provided a detailed account of her life prior to imprisonment, explaining relations with her family and her experience of sexual and domestic abuse as well as her practice of self-injury and enduring mental health problems. These were themes she used to explain both her offending as well as painful experience of imprisonment. This led to a discussion about her current relationship and her plans for the future. Carmen was imprisoned for minor theft offences and when I met her she had been out of prison for 3 months.

**Denise:** is a 34 year old single mother who struggled with an alcohol addiction. I met her in London and we had a long conversation about the particular life events that drew her to alcohol, shop-lifting and then to prison. Her account of the prison was not as critical as those of other participants, as she felt that the prison provided her with a unique opportunity to take responsibility over her actions and helped her rethink her priorities as a mother. She used her time in prison as a rehabilitative opportunity and at the time of the interviews she had been clean for almost 4 months. She served a 3 month sentence for shoplifting and at the time of the interview, she had been released from prison for approximately 1 month. Apart from this short custodial sentence, she had no previous prison history. Denise explained on various occasions her vulnerable emotional state and admittedly both the initial and the follow up interview were emotionally intense for both of us. We connected well, as we shared some common interests and experiences and this was particularly helpful in easing a discussion about self-injury in prison, for which Denise provided rich data especially in relation to how such a practice can explain both pre-prison traumas as well as act as a means of coping for some women in prison.

**Eve:** I met Eve in Crawley, Sussex after she was introduced to me through a drug-detoxification focused organization operating in the area. She is 37 years old and identified as a mixed race British woman. Though relatively quiet at the beginning and somewhat uneasy with the interview process, she understood the project well and provided interesting data particularly in relation to ageing in prison, medical services and coping through prison food and the use of the canteen. She was especially critical of the lack of diverse options available at the prison canteen as well as the cultural pressure to take care of her self-presentation. She also discussed the pains of imprisonment with references to her maternal responsibilities and provided interesting insight into the relevance of bodily self-presentation during visitation hours. In our second meeting, Eve was more relaxed and explained in detail her experiences prior to imprisonment, giving a detailed account of how her past relationships drew her to drug-abuse as well as crime, emphasising that her offending is closely linked to her intimate relations and her eagerness to assist and feel accepted by partners who engage in crime-related activities. She served 2 prison sentences, the last of which was for assisting in smuggling stolen goods and for which she stayed in prison for 4 months. At the time I met her, she had been out of prison for approximately 4 months.

**Fiona:** At the time of the interviews, Fiona was 29 years old and had been out of prison for 4 months. I met Fiona twice in Sheffield and after walking around the centre for a long time

we then had most of our discussion at a local coffee shop. Fiona and I had one of the longest and richest interviews; she provided details about life in prison focusing on various deprivations, as well as explaining the structure and rules of inmate cultures regarding prison food, canteen, clothing and health-related routines. She was particularly perceptive regarding the aims of the project and offered very helpful feedback in our second meeting, introducing me to the idea of the changing body in prison and how the ambivalent process of transformation can be seen as a source of embodied anxiety and self-identity reformation in prison. She also made very interesting comparisons between life in prison and life after release, emphasising the perpetuation of some of the effects of imprisonment. Fiona did not have a long history of imprisonment and she served only one short prison sentence indirectly being involved in drug-trafficking offences. She explained the events that led to her arrest as the result of a series of drug-abuse, mental health and economic deprivation related issues as well as a history of drug-abuse in her family and peer groups.

**Gemma:** Gemma was 26 years old at the time of the interviews and she served her only prison sentence for theft, staying in prison for 2 months. At the time I met her Sheffield she had been out of prison for approximately 6 months and she was attempting to find a job through the assistance of a local charity. I met her through this charity and we spend approximately 3 hours (on 2 separate occasions) in this organization's offices talking about her prison experience. Possibly due to our age, Gemma and I connected well and had a friendly and informal discussion that focused on pressures to be feminine, dieting and fashion, as well as ways of coping with stress. She provided interesting examples of the manifestation of psychosomatic symptoms while in prison and discussed in some detail her depression prior to imprisonment, as well as the motivations behind her self-injury. In many ways, she did not identify as a 'typical prisoner' and tended to talk about other women who have been to prison derogatively, emphasising her efforts to recreate a prison-free identity post-release. More recently, I met with Gemma who has managed to find a part-time job and she is also doing voluntary work with the charity organization Catch22.

**Hayley:** One of the older participants in the sample, Hayley is 37 and comes from a mixed race British background. I met her in Sheffield and at the time of the first interview she had been out of prison for 3 weeks. She provided rich data on aspects of imprisonment that focused on clothing pressures, the use and distribution of illicit drugs in prison as well as coping routines focused on body-care routines and eating. She explained that although new to prison life (she served only 1 prison sentence, staying in prison for 3 months), she managed to integrate enough with inmate cultures to feel both the pressures they can pose, as well as eventually enjoy the privileges that certain relations in prison could provide. She used interesting details to explain the embodiment of imprisonment by making particular references to the 'senses' of the prison, as well as reflecting on how her body felt the pains of imprisonment and how prison changed her both on a bodily as well as psychological level. She explained her life prior to imprisonment as 'normal', differentiating herself from other female prisoners who face drug-abuse problems. Having said that, she also explained that economic deprivation and a volatile mental state were key factors that led to her imprisonment and to her 'bad state' while in prison. She was imprisoned for a vandalism offence.

**Iris:** I met Iris through an organization, but conducted the interview in a public space near Sheffield. Iris was 29 years old at the time we met and she served only one prison sentence, staying in prison for 3 months serving a theft related offence. At the time, she had been out of prison for approximately 4 months. Iris talked most about her experience of imprisonment in relation to changing attitudes towards her body and health. Though she clarified her experience of the prison was traumatic and painful, she also recognized the importance of self-reflection that imprisonment provided her, highlighting a renewed sense of responsibility and accountability. Though she shared similar experiences to many other participants, she was critical of other female inmates' attitudes and sought to explain how she differed from them. Iris and I had a particularly interesting exchange regarding cultural and ethnic differences in prison, and she provided a unique narrative through which to better understand some women's resistance routes as well as painful strategies of coping in prison. Identifying as a black British woman, she contextualised the culturally specific groups found in some women's inmate cultures and highlighted resistance as both a gendered as well as ethnically specific concept.

**Katherine:** I visited Katherine twice in Sheffield. She was a lively and active participant and at that time was 28 years old. She served 2 prison sentences, 6 months each for drug-related offences. My interview schedule was not used for much of our discussion as Katherine chose to explain the embodiment of her prison experiences in a very narrative and story-like manner. She explained in some detail her background; stressing the economic hardships her family experienced for generations and discussed her drug abuse history by connecting it to peer-relations she developed as a teenager, and later on by engaging in the drug economy through prostitution and some intimate relations with drug-traffickers. She was very detailed in her descriptions of the prison focusing on topics related to body-image, her changing body and detoxification, racial relations and the importance of exercise in prison.

**Laura:** I met Laura in Sheffield and although we had only one interview together, this was a reflexive experience. She is 39 years old and served one prison sentence, staying in prison for six. She served this sentence for drug-trafficking offences and when I met her, she had been released from prison for approximately 6 months. Laura used drugs for a long time and worked as a prostitute since she was a teenager. She maintained relations with her siblings but has not seen her parents in years who made some efforts to help her detoxify from heroin, but none of these rehabilitation experiences worked for her. As Laura explained, she was not ready to give up heroin and this was coupled with mental health problems and her eagerness to leave home. Ever since, she lived on the streets or with boyfriends and has experienced a series of health problems that required surgical procedures. She was now making her first serious effort in years to stop using drugs. She gave a very detailed account of the anxiety, deprivation, fear and isolation she felt while in prison. She described the loneliness of the prison experience through examples of embodied coping and gave a meticulous account of her experiences of self-injury and drug taking. Though she was eager to provide details into the pains of imprisonment, she was more hesitant to discuss past experiences, especially in relation to distressing events she endured as a street-worker.

**Magda:** Spending 8 months in prison for her last sentence and generally having a long prison history, Magda provided a unique insight into the organization of inmate culture and

the code of conduct appropriate for female prisoners. She is 23 years old and has a long history of addictions. When I met her in Sheffield she had been out of prison for approximately 5 months and has served 5 prison short prison sentences as a young offender and adult prisoner. She talked specifically about issues of bullying, inmate hierarchies and prisoner violence. She also discussed her drug addiction and life prior to imprisonment and provided a unique account of the relationship between gendered expectations, appearance and prison pains. As a child Magda grew up in foster homes and in her late teens she lived with others in abandoned buildings. She was making money through sex-work and drug-dealing and she served most of her prison sentences for drug trafficking and shoplifting. More recently, she decided to take a course in cooking and is hoping one day to work as a chef.

**Natasha:** I met Natasha in Sheffield through another interview participant. She is 41 years old and served 5 prison sentences. Natasha related her time in prison particularly well with experiences prior to her imprisonment and especially her alcohol addiction and experiences of abuse from both her father and later on from her partner. She served a relatively long sentence for drug trafficking (18 months) and appeared to have a long history of imprisonment in England as well as abroad for assisting other offenders in drug trafficking and smuggling stolen goods. She talked of the prison as system of control and regulation and focused her discussion of the embodied pains of imprisonment by giving specific examples related to her changing body in prison, gaining weight and coping through prison food as well as explaining inmate hierarchies through a discussion of key jobs in prisons, and particularly kitchen related occupations. At the time of the interview Natasha had been out of prison for less than 2 weeks.

**Olga:** Though Olga spent small periods of time in prison, she had been to different prison establishments and compared and contrasted these during our two interviews. She is 24 years old and served 4 prison sentences. At the time I met her in Wakefield, she had been out of prison for 4 months. She focused her discussion on the pressure she experienced from inmates and the prison's cultural organization and discussed the reasons behind the development of isolated, lonesome identities in prison. She talked about feeling fearful of other inmates, not engaging with many others and discussed coping in prison through an eagerness to retain self-control. This was done through controlled dieting and a daily routine focused on taking care of her body. Her emotional turmoil in prison was best explained through a sense of helplessness and resignation from taking part in social aspects of inmate life. She explained her offending in terms of social pressure from peers, economic marginalisation as well as aggression related mental health issues. She served her last prison sentence for theft against the person.

**Pauline:** One of the youngest participants I met as well as one of the least experienced with the prison, Pauline served only one short prison sentence (6 months) and she is 23 years old. I met her in Doncaster and at the time of the interview she had been released for 3 months. She comes from a troubled family background, having experienced sexual abuse from a sibling and her parents' violent divorce. As an adult she developed serious mental health problems and at the time of her arrest she was attempting suicide. She was imprisoned for assaulting a police officer when he tried to prevent her from killing herself in what she described as an infantilising and insulting conversation he had with her. She was shocked to

receive a custodial sentence and this was also reflected in her deeply fearful and painful recollection of time in prison. Members of her family do not know she has been imprisoned and she talked about prison's pains as expanding onto a more general sense of stigmatisation and self-degradation. She focused her account on a comparison of her health status inside and outside prison, critiquing medical services in prison as well as the culture of bullying fostered in women's prisons that focuses on aspects of physical appearance and material possessions. She also talked about life after prison and the difficulty of finding a job and starting afresh because of her prison record.

**Erika:** I met Erika in Doncaster. She is 24 years old and spent 18 months in prison for robbery. She served one more prison sentence for assault when she was 20 years old. When we met she had been out of prison for approximately 6 months. On our first meeting she discussed elaborately different phases of her prison experience, highlighting the importance of passing time differently in prison and commenting on the austere environment of the prison as a traumatic event in her life overall. She also referred to themes of time and space to explain her embodied sense of imprisonment. She focused on the process of detoxification and explained how both her body and behaviour struggled to cope with prison especially in the first days of her incarceration; this was even more difficult when serving her first prison sentence. She talked mostly about health-related matters and explained in detail how her body changed during her time in prison. On our second meeting she contextualised her prison experience to her heroin addiction prior to imprisonment as well as to her struggle to remain drug free and stay away from crime after her release.

**Regina:** Having been released from prison for only 1 week in our first meeting, Regina provided the richest and most detailed data informing this study. She is 26 years old and served 6 custodial sentences, the last of which was for 18 months and was related to drug trafficking and possession. She has a long history of self-injury as well as past experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation. She served previous sentences for drug-trafficking, kidnapping and assault and has engaged in gang related activities, mostly by through intimate (and highly exploitative) relationships she had with drug-dealers. She also has a history of homelessness, and legal and illegal drug abuse. We met in Wakefield and we talked in detail about inmate culture and rules, her conscious efforts to retain status and power in prison as well as her long history of addiction. She contrasted her drug-free attitude toward her body with a careless and helpless approach toward her health felt during both her time in prison (and thus detoxification) as well as prior to her imprisonment.

**Susan:** Susan is 35 years old and comes from a mixed race background. She served one short custodial sentence of 3 months for theft and had no prior prison history. When I met her in Wakefield she had been released for a little longer than 2 weeks. Although my encounter with Susan was shorter than other interviews I conducted, she took an interest in the topic of this project and talked mostly about bodily coping strategies in prison, including washing. She also offered rich data into the experience of self-injury as a means of coping with the pains of imprisonment and focused on the negative impact of scars on her sense of femininity and self-worth. She talked in detail about her sense of self-worth after release and discussed her chaotic life through a description of the difficulties she is facing with accommodation post-release.

**Tanya:** I met Tanya in Doncaster and at the time she had been released from prison for approximately 2 months. Tanya spent a short period in prison (2 months) for shoplifting and had no previous prison history. Therefore, she initially she focused on her pre-prison experiences and the stigmatising impact of imprisonment. She is 37 years old and has been diagnosed with several mental disorders for which she has been on medication since her early 20s. She left home in her late teens to look for a job near Manchester and after several failed relationships, she started working as a prostitute. Later on in the interview she went on to discuss in more detail the emotional impact of imprisonment and gave an insightful account of her self-injury as a means of retaining self-control in prison. She also gave a detailed account of the difficulty in retaining a healthy body in prison and critiqued in particular the lengthy and bureaucratic procedures involved in providing medical services in prison.

**Emily:** Emily is 22 years old and identified as black British. She served only one prison sentence, staying in prison for 6 months. When I met her near Sheffield she had been out of prison for approximately 6 months, serving the rest of her sentence with the Together Women Project in Sheffield. She was taking part in a therapy group and was visiting the one-stop shop for career and accommodation support. Being one of the few participants from an ethnic minority group, Emily talked about her pre-prison experiences not only in terms of economic deprivation but also through experiences of racism and prejudice. She served her custodial sentence for persistent shoplifting and theft and expressed the pains of imprisonment particularly through the pressure and fear inmate competitiveness caused her. She also gave details of the stories of inmates she befriended in prison. She chose to depersonalise her account by explaining traumatic and painful moments in the prison through these other women's stories, emphasising the prevalence of self-injury in women's prisons and the unique profile of many women prisoners in terms of their mental and physiological health needs.

**Vera:** Vera is a Polish national and she is 23 years old. When I met her in Worcester she had been released from prison for 5 months. She served a one year sentence and had previously served another shorter custodial sentence for smuggling stolen cigarettes in the country. Vera's account was an interesting critique of English prisons. On the one hand she described in detail the negative impact that imprisonment had on her overall sense of self and mental health and talked of her isolation, especially at the start of her sentence, due to language difficulties. On the other hand she described the prison as a resource for rehabilitation and detoxification and recognized the efforts of some prison staff to help women through their sentence. Due to experiences of abuse prior to her imprisonment and experiences of sexual exploitation since her later teens, for her the prison was seen as both a painful as well as a safe place.

**Alicia:** I met Alicia near Worcester on two different occasions; at the time of our first meeting she had been released from prison for 4 months. She is 42 years old and served 2 prison sentences. The last of these was for 6 months for theft and shoplifting as well as heroin possession. She was one of the older participants in the sample and last time she was in prison she tried to detoxify from an enduring heroin addiction. At the time we met she was attending training courses and was hoping to eventually find a job in the catering industry. She talked about the differences between life outside and inside prison, comparing

prison on the one hand with her chaotic life prior to her incarceration as well as with 'normal' life experienced by 'average women'. She engaged with the topic of embodiment not only in explaining the pains of imprisonment, but also used the body as means to explain her changed appearance and the shift from a deviant, young look to a more normalised, middle-aged appearance that helped her feel less stigmatised and socially-included after her release from prison.

**Natalie:** Natalie is 42 years old and served a 5 month custodial sentence for possession and drug trafficking. She has a long history of heroin and cocaine abuse and drug trafficking, but only served 1 prison sentence. She found the focus of the project relevant to her own anxieties and sense of self and explained that many aspects of this study go beyond the prison and connect more generally with the lifestyles of women who have experienced economic deprivations. She talked about her drug-abuse history and explained her offending as a result of a lack of parental direction and a more general sense of social exclusion. She left school prematurely and lived a chaotic life, having several part-time jobs in local shops and car parks. She also discussed her body image anxiety at length referring to her changing body in prison, weight gain and coping through eating. She explained her experiences as especially stigmatising and expressed feelings of isolation after her release from prison. After release from prison Natalie attempted to reconcile with her daughter who is now helping her look for jobs and providing her with some economic support. I met Natalie through an organization that provided methadone treatment near Worcester and at the time she had been released from prison for 3 months. After her treatment, she explained that she is hoping to apply for some distance learning courses and move elsewhere to look for a more permanent job.

**Yolanda:** I met Yolanda through another participant near Worcester. She is 37 years old and served a 5 month sentence for drug possession. She had been out of prison for about 6 months when I met her and did not have a long prison history. Though I did not have the chance to meet her for a follow up interview, we had a rather long discussion centred on her heroin abuse history and her current efforts to find a job. Yolanda discussed traumatic experiences of bullying and violence in prison and explained her pains of imprisonment as the result of both the strict regulation and control of liberty employed by prison staff, as well as the aggressive inmate cultures fostered in prison. She also discussed the symbolic pains of imprisonment referring often to the post-release pressure a prison record has on her future prospects.



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